

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE

# INVINCIBLE™



VOLUME FIVE

## THE FACTS OF LIFE

Introduction by Mike Wieringo

WYA

**image** COMICS PRESENTS

# INVINCIBLE™

## THE FACTS OF LIFE



CREATED BY  
**ROBERT KIRKMAN  
& CORY WALKER**

**image**®





YES  
SIR.

writer

**ROBERT  
KIRKMAN**

penciler, inker

**RYAN  
OTTLEY**

colorist

**BILL  
CRABTREE**

letterer

**RUS  
WOOTON**

cover

**RYAN OTTLEY  
& BILL CRABTREE**

## ORIGIN STORIES

**MONSTER GIRL**

penciler, inker

**TODD NAUCK**

colorist

**BILL CRABTREE**

**ATOM EVE**

penciler, inker

**KHARY RANDOLPH**

colorist

**KANNILA TRIPP**

**IMMORTAL**

penciler, inker

**CORY WALKER**

colorist

**BILL CRABTREE**

**REX SPODE**

penciler, inker

**MATHEW ROBERTS**

colorist

**BILL CRABTREE**

**DUPLI-KATE**

artist

**JOSHUA LUNA**



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**INVINCIBLE, VOL. 5: THE FACTS OF LIFE**

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PRINTED IN CHINA

ISBN: 978-1-58240-554-4



# INTRODUCTION

Robert Kirkman is a very lucky guy.

Y'see, not every one is born with the kind of imagination and ability to craft the sheer volume of stories that Robert does. It's like his mind is a warehouse packed to the rafters with colorful, well-rounded and fascinating characters that he's able to weave complex and engaging stories for and around. If you're ANY kind of comic book fan, you're bound to have heard of at least ONE of Robert's myriad creator-owned projects--books like the red-hot popular WALKING DEAD, CAPES, TECH JACKET, BRIT... and my absolute favorite of ALL of them, the one you're holding in your hands now, INVINCIBLE. Like most folks my age, I grew up reading superhero comics--and I still love them, deep down. But as the years-- the decades-- have slid by, these 40-plus year old characters have lost a little of their luster. After all, when a character is a corporate icon (as all Marvel and DC characters are, let's face it)-- they're not allowed to change or grow, and so eventually become a bit stale. That's why I was thrilled when I discovered INVINCIBLE. Every time I see a new character pop up, I'm always hoping for the best--hoping for something that will thrill me. I'm usually let down, unfortunately. But with INVINCIBLE, here was a book that stirred those old feelings I had as a child when I first discovered those colorful icons. And yet, it was also modern and fresh and grabbed my interest from the start.

But here's where Robert is REALLY lucky: the artists he works with.

Because when it comes down to it-- without the artists who draw the stories Robert writes (the same goes for ANY writer, for that matter--but we're talking about INVINCIBLE here), all those stories amount to are words on paper; formless; colorless; without life. And of all those aforementioned creator-owned titles Robert pens, INVINCIBLE also happens to have had my favorite artists. When I first saw Cory Walker's (INVINCIBLE'S original artist, and co-creator) artwork, I was amazed. His use of minimal but precise and hard-edged line work was perfect for this book. And though his lines were hard as diamond--they were also fluid and full of motion--his characters suffused with emotion. I had seen others do that kind of work, but none of them as well as Cory. Bill Crabtree's color work was the perfect complement to the art as well. Bill is one of the most overlooked and under-rated colorists in the business. He is brilliant in his choices of hue--and bravely effective in his minimalism. In a business overstuffed with colorists who



can't seem to NOT over-render, Bill's is a singular voice. As far as I was concerned, Robert had an absolutely flawless art team in place. So you can imagine my grief when I learned that Cory would be leaving INVINCIBLE. I couldn't imagine ANYONE else taking his place. I think that Robert's ancestry must be Irish, though. Because without missing a beat, he found Ryan Ottley, who stepped right into Cory's shoes and made the book all his own. Ryan, I suspect, kept the simplicity of line to make for a smooth transition from Cory's work-- but there's an elasticity to Ryan's art--a sense of motion and energy that's uniquely his own. And his ability to depict intense expressions on his character's faces is absolutely wonderful. His is the kind of work that just immediately draws (no pun intended, unless you find it clever, in which case, I did it entirely on purpose) you in to the world of INVINCIBLE. More incredibly, Ryan is able to both pencil and ink INVINCIBLE, and keep it on schedule -- and almost every issue of the book is packed with intense action as well as heavy character interaction. He's a wonder to watch every month.

And so, as you can see, Robert is a very, very lucky fellow. WE, the readers and fans of INVINCIBLE are lucky as well, though, you see. We're lucky that Robert has the talent he has for writing, for creating imaginative stories and characters, and for his ability to find such talented and motivated artists. First, Cory Walker--and now Ryan Ottley along with Bill Crabtree, make INVINCIBLE a wonder not only to read each month.... but for ME (and I'm biased, as a guy who draws myself) to gawk at the artwork that truly brings Mark and company to such vivid life.

**MIKE  
WIERINGO**  
Durham, North Carolina

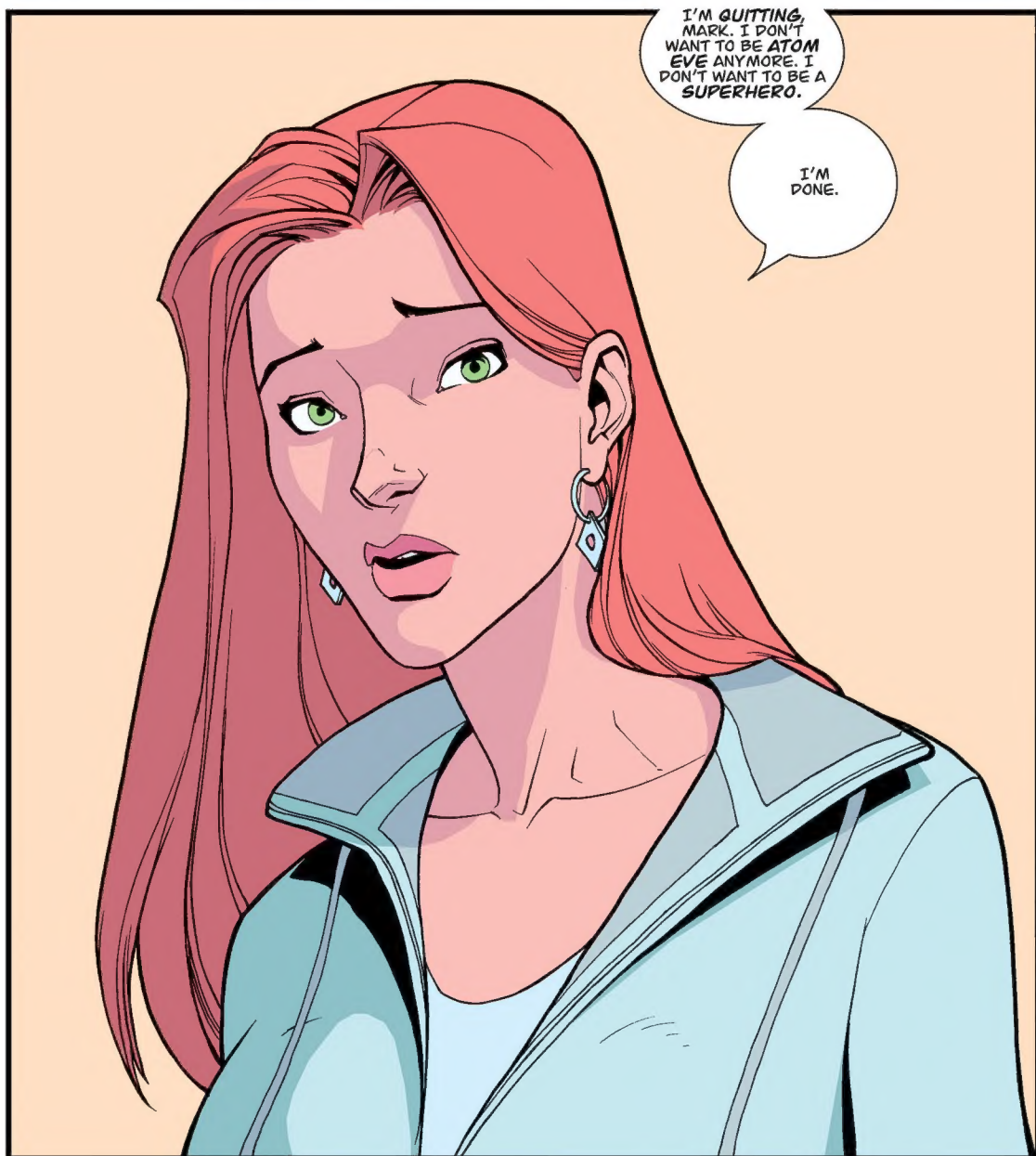
*Mike is the superstar artist and unabashed animal-lover who has had long, character-defining runs on Fantastic Four and The Flash, both collaborations with Mark Waid. He's also known for his creator-owned book Tellos, written by Todd Dezago. He's currently working on Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man for Marvel Comics, written by Peter David.*



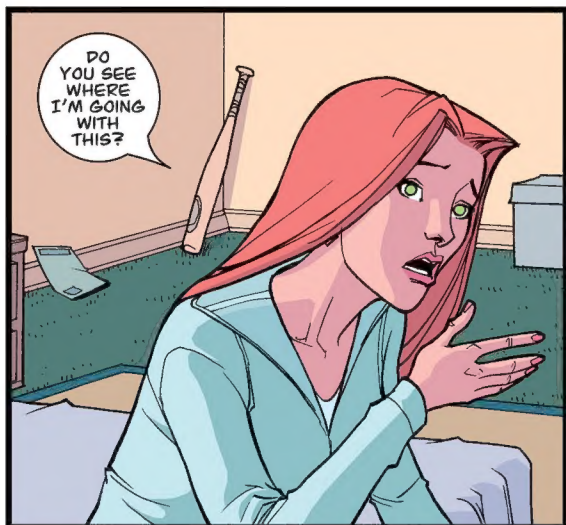
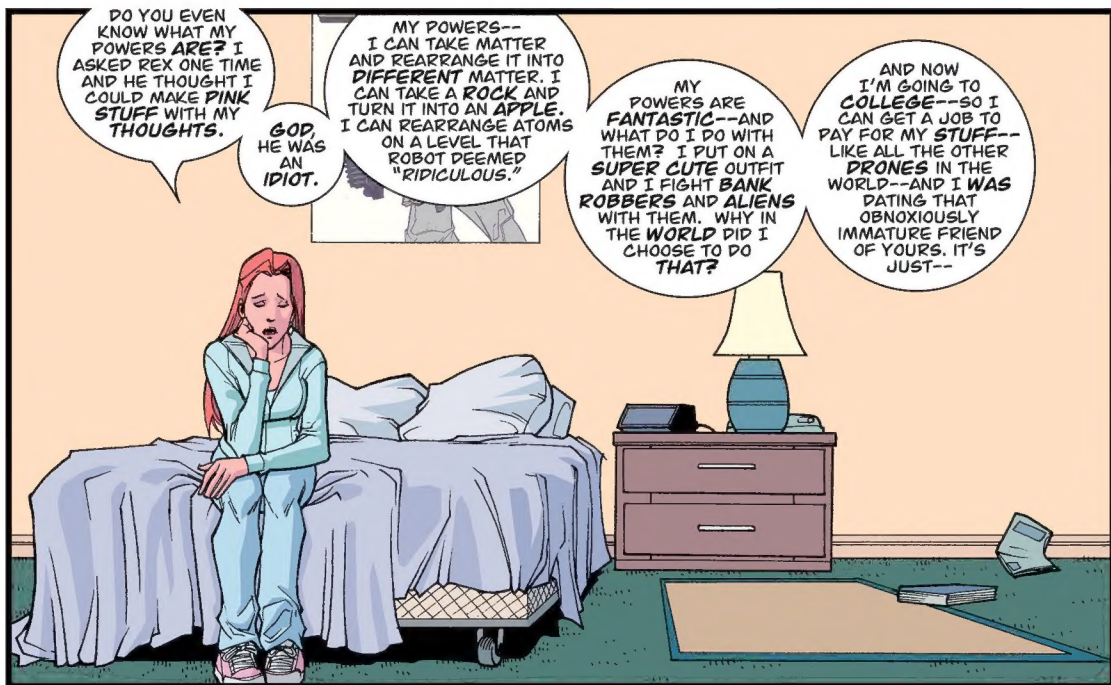
# CHAPTER ONE



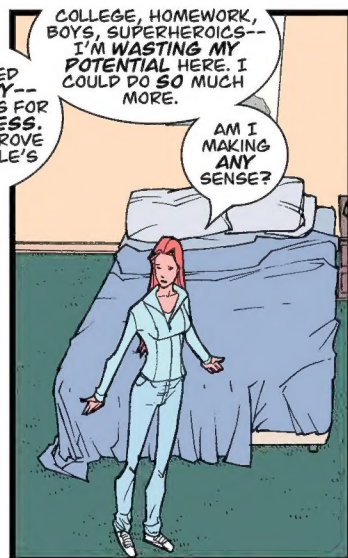
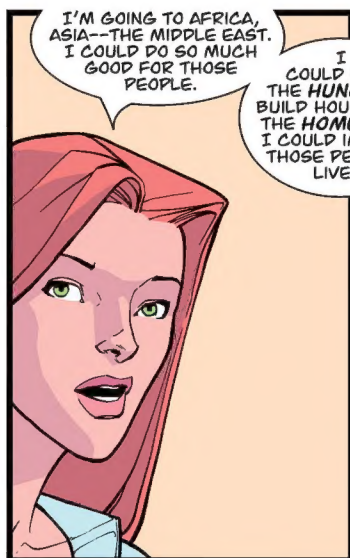
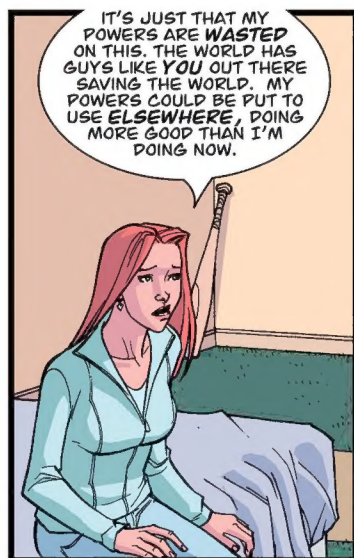


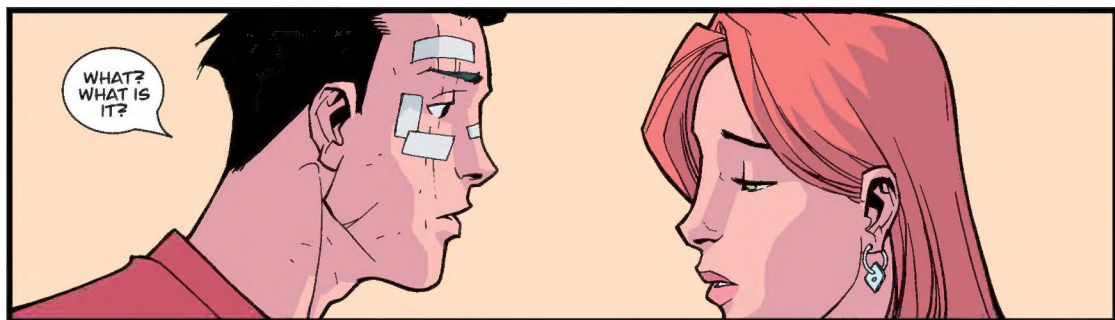
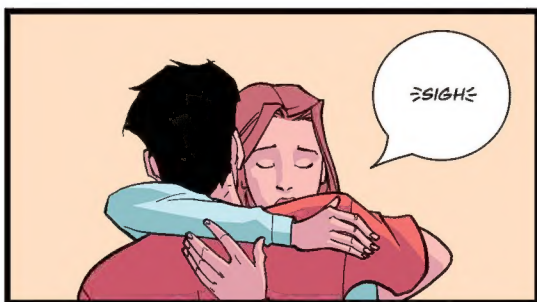
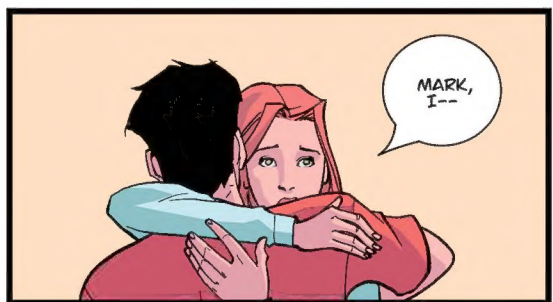
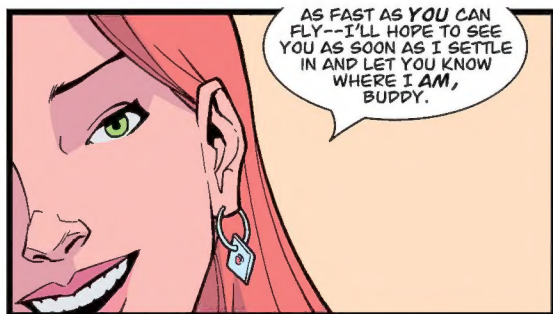




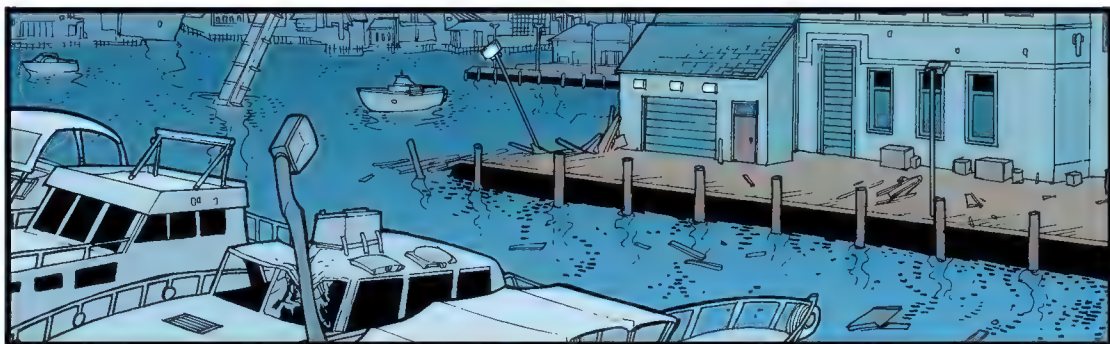












I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW, ANGSTROM. I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED "ELBOW ROOM."

GOOD EYE, MAULER. YOU AND YOUR DOUBLE NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS ME. I DISCOVERED A REALITY WHERE A VIRUS ATTACKED THE Y CHROMOSOME, KILLING ALL THE MALES ON EARTH. I THOUGHT MY OTHER DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS DESERVED SOME R & R AFTER ALL THIS WAITING AROUND.

LET ME TELL YOU-- THEY'RE GETTING A ROYAL TREATMENT THERE. I'LL BE HEADING OVER MYSELF SHORTLY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME ALONG AFTER YOU REACH A STOPPING POINT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A TIME.

THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS US NEARLY AS MUCH AS GETTING THIS PROJECT DONE SO WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR PLANS.

YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE PERFECTED THE PROCESS I USED TO DOWNLOAD MY MEMORIES INTO MY CLONE.

YOU MEAN THAT I USED, RIGHT, CLONE?

CAN WE NOT DO THIS? ANYWAY--EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER. WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING ALL THE MACHINES IN YOUR VARIOUS DIMENSIONAL SAFE HOUSES.

WE ARE PROBABLY ONLY A WEEK AWAY.

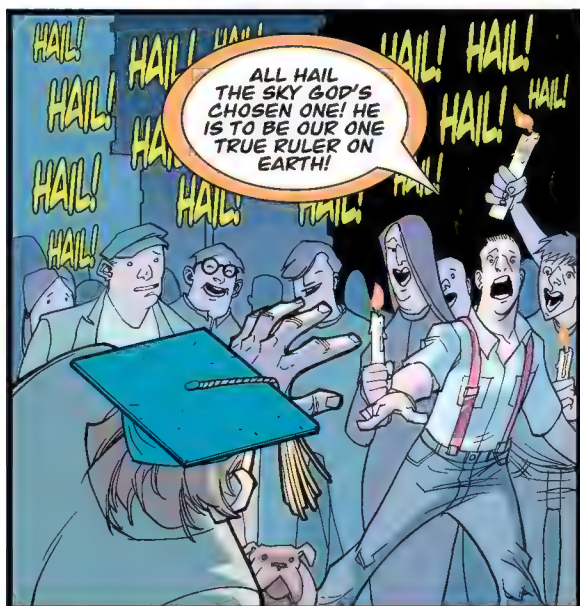
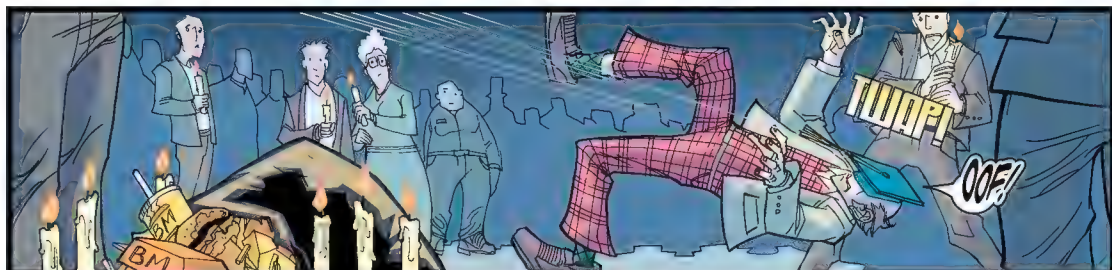


FANTASTIC. KEEP ME POSTED. I CAN'T KEEP ENTIRE CITIES WORTH OF LADIES WAITING.

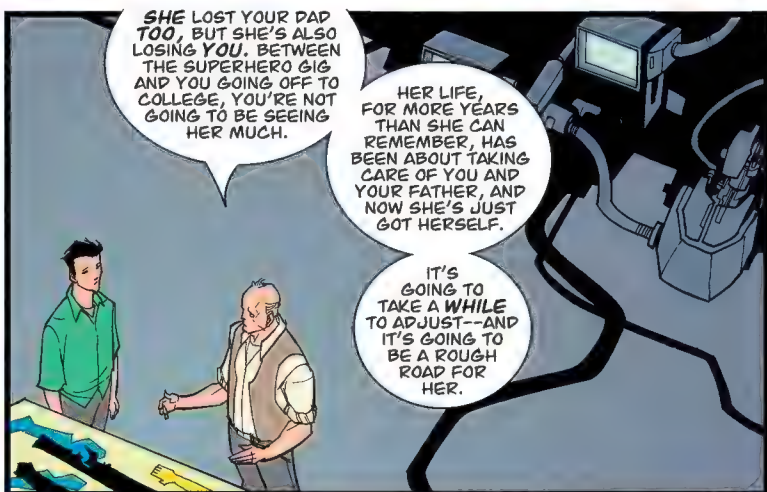
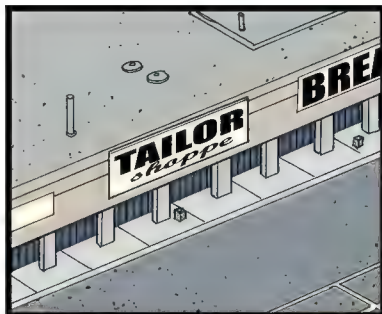
I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING... MAYBE.



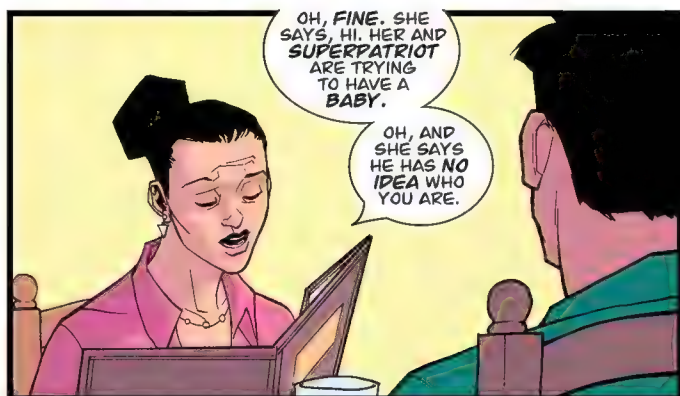
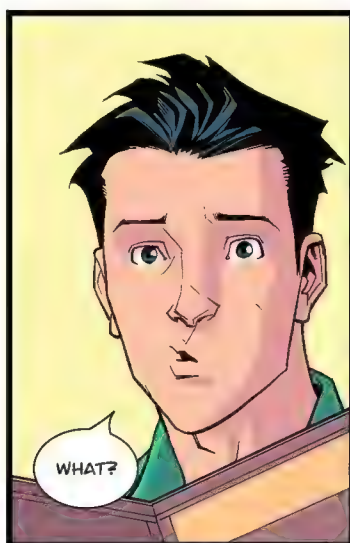














NO, I'M PULLING YOUR LEG. HE SAID HE REMEMBERED YOU FROM THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE FUNERAL HE SAYS YOU DO GOOD WORK.

SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU AND AMBER-- YOU TWO SERIOUS NOW?



KINDA.

MAYBE A LITTLE.

I GUESS.



SO NO MORE, "WE'RE JUST STUDYING," EXCUSES FOR ME TO SEE THROUGH? YOU'RE ADMITTING IT NOW?

YEAH, I GUESS. CAN WE NOT--



SO, DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULD TALK TO YOU ABOUT--?



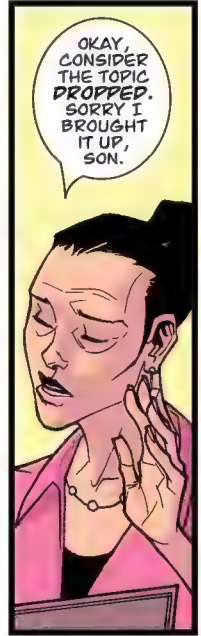
NO.



I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO ARE "SAFE." ARE YOU GUYS--?



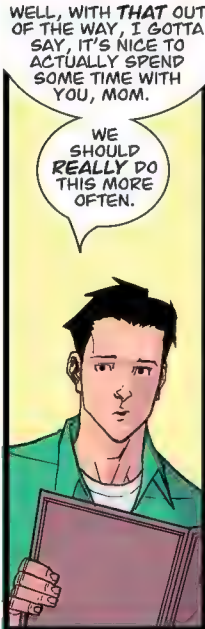
NO.



OKAY, CONSIDER THE TOPIC **DROPPED**. SORRY I BROUGHT IT UP, SON.

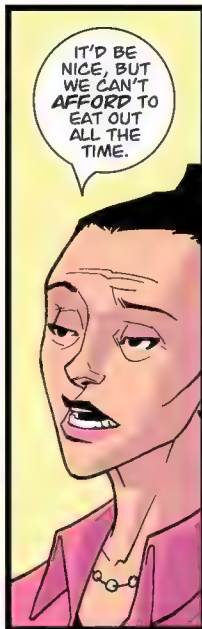


...



WELL, WITH *THAT* OUT OF THE WAY, I GOTTA SAY, IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOU, MOM.

WE SHOULD **REALLY** DO THIS MORE OFTEN.



IT'D BE NICE, BUT WE CAN'T **AFFORD** TO EAT OUT ALL THE TIME.



MOM.

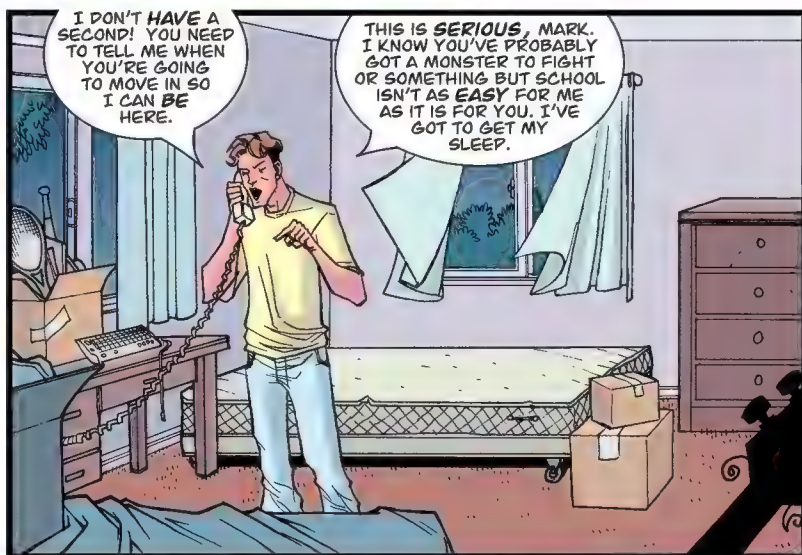
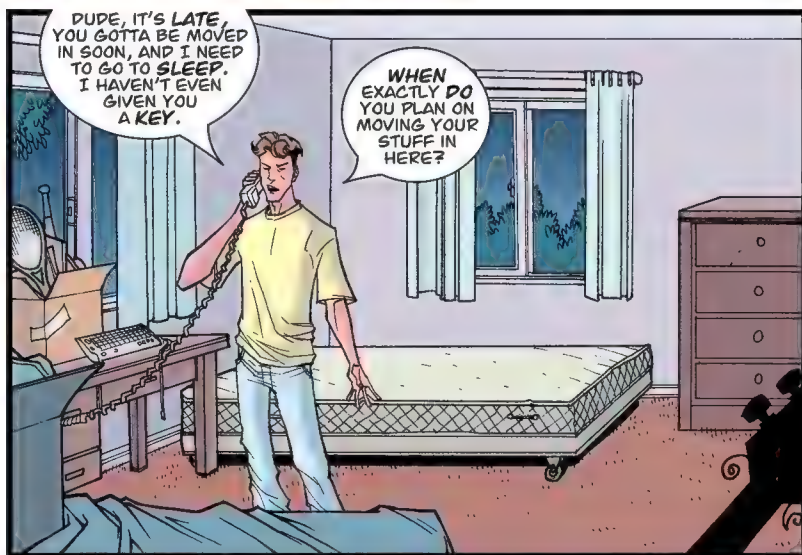
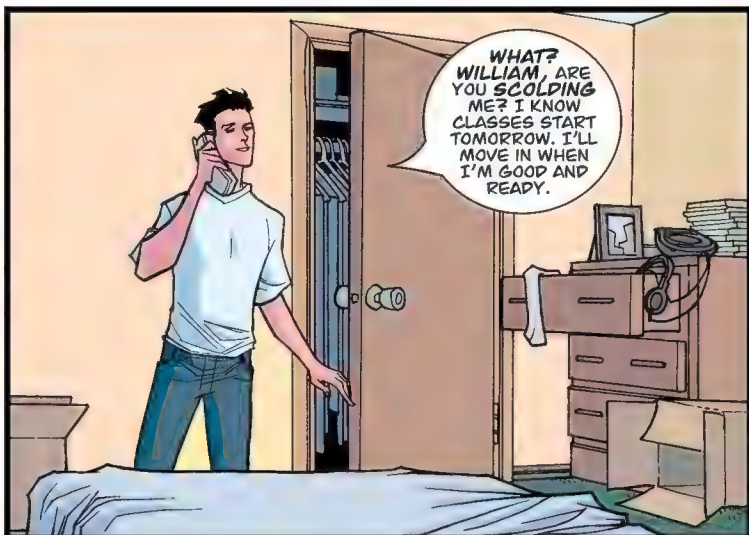
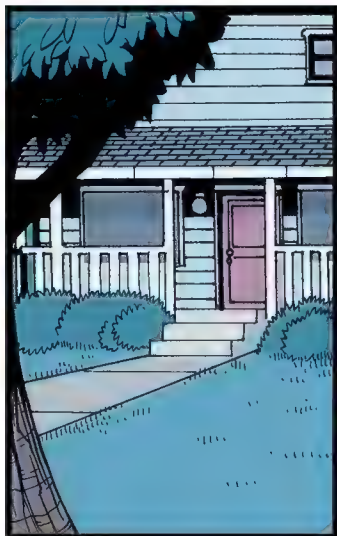
RICH.

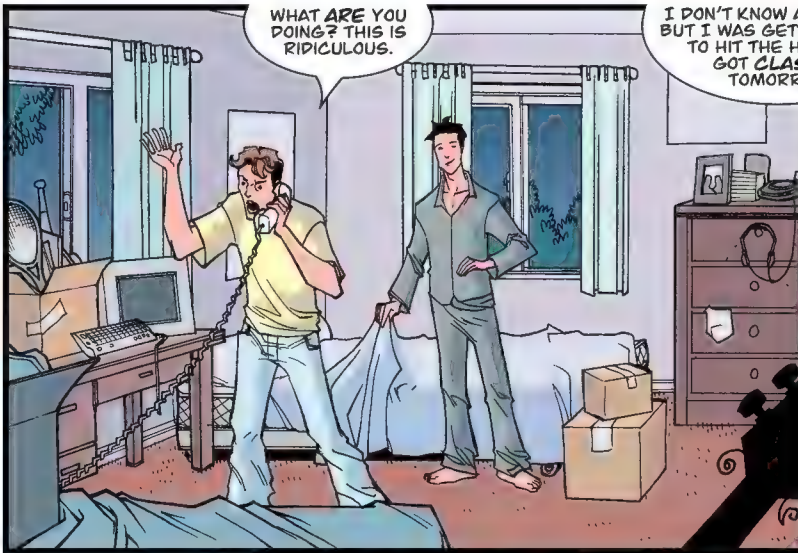
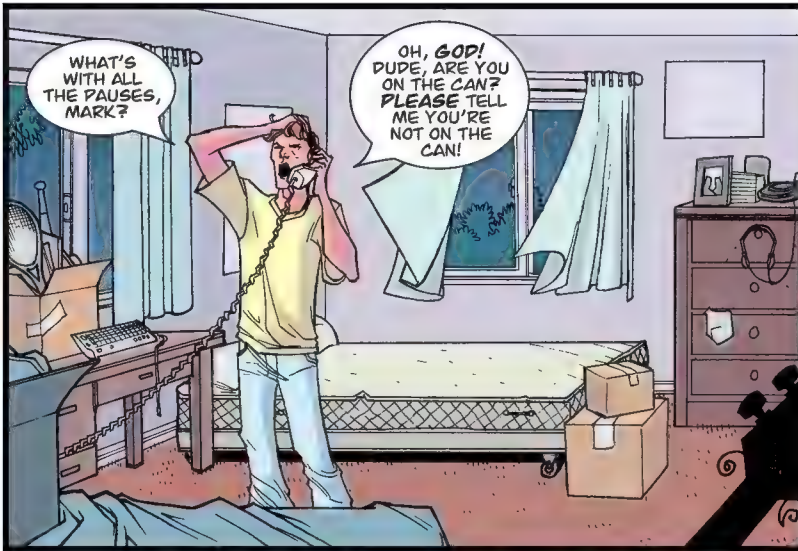


OH, YEAH.

FORGOT.











BEEN A WHILE  
SINCE WE'VE  
DONE THIS,  
HUH?

WHEN  
WAS MY LAST  
SLEEP OVER  
PARTY? NINTH  
GRADE OR  
TENTH?

TENTH.  
HAVE WE  
NOT SPENT  
THE NIGHT  
TOGETHER SINCE  
THEN? WOW  
IT HAS BEEN  
A WHILE.



SO, HOW  
ARE THINGS  
WITH YOUR  
MOM,  
MAN?

SINCE THAT  
STUFF WITH YOUR  
DAD, I MEAN. YOU  
NEVER REALLY TALK  
ABOUT IT, AND MOST  
OF THE TIME OTHER  
PEOPLE ARE AROUND  
SO I HAVEN'T  
ASKED.

EVERY-  
THING  
OKAY?

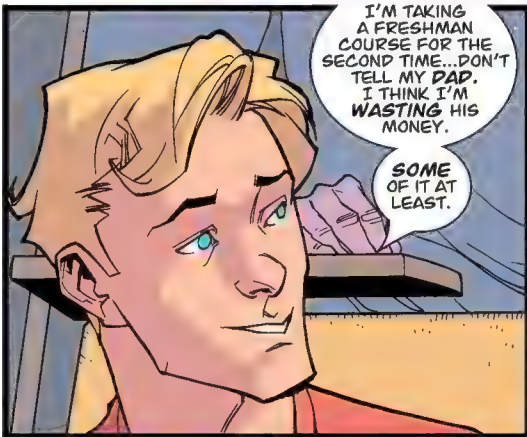
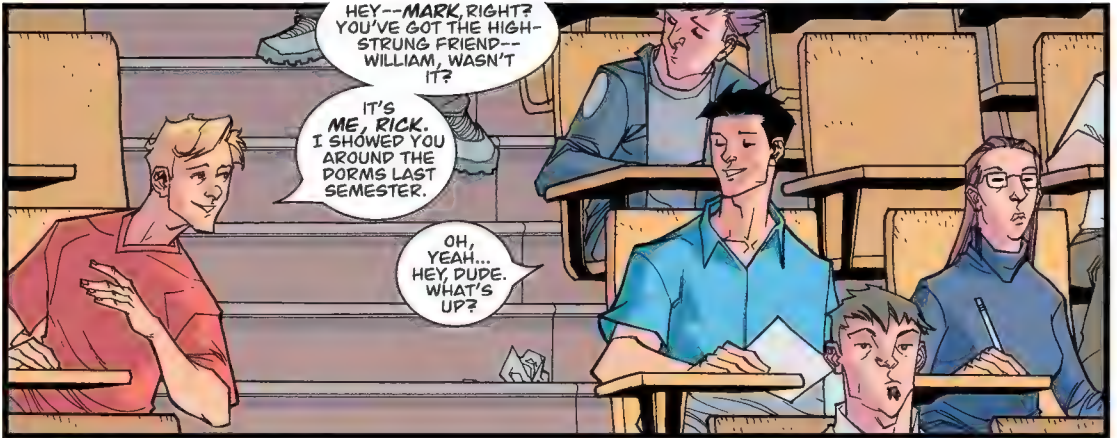
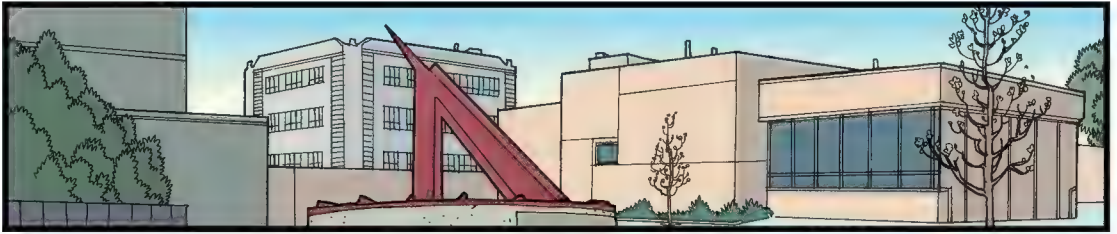


MARK?

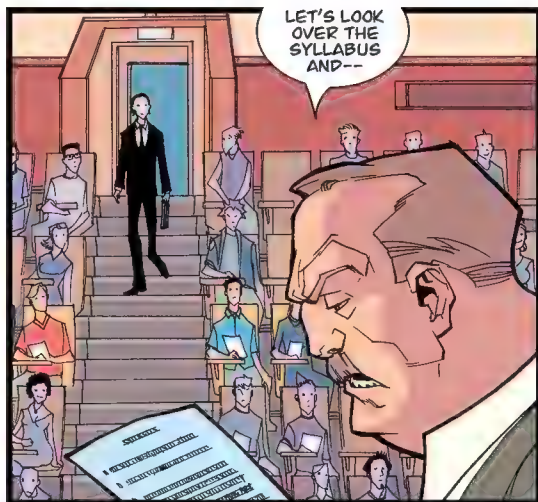


IT'S FINE,  
REALLY.

I JUST  
DON'T WANT  
TO TALK  
ABOUT  
IT.







LET'S LOOK  
OVER THE  
SYLLABUS  
AND--



SAHEMI

PLEASE  
TAKE YOUR  
SEAT **QUICKLY**.  
I HOPE THIS ISN'T  
AN INDICATION OF  
YOUR PUNCTUALITY  
IN GENERAL,  
YOUNG MAN.



PARDON ME  
IF THIS CLASS  
ISN'T MY TOP PRIORITY.  
I COULD TEACH THIS  
CLASS, YOU PRIMATE.  
I SKIPPED IT FOUR YEARS  
AGO BECAUSE IT WAS  
**BENEATH** ME BUT NOW  
I'M TOLD I **MUST** TAKE  
IT TO MOVE ON TO  
GRADUATE  
SCHOOL.

DON'T  
MAKE THIS A  
**THING**, OKAY? I'LL  
BE COMING AND GOING  
AS I **PLEASE**. I HOPE  
MY PERFECT SCORES  
WILL GRANT ME **SOME**  
LEEWAY WHEN IT COMES  
TO THIS RIDICULOUS  
RITUAL OF PHYSICAL  
APPEARANCE IN THESE  
CLASSROOMS.

I COULD  
DO WITHOUT  
THE  
CONFLICT.

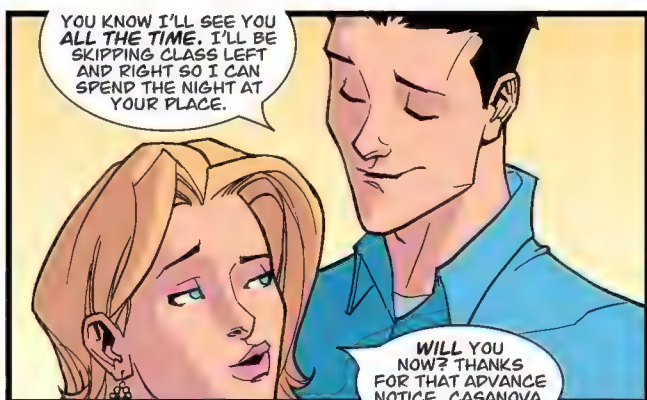
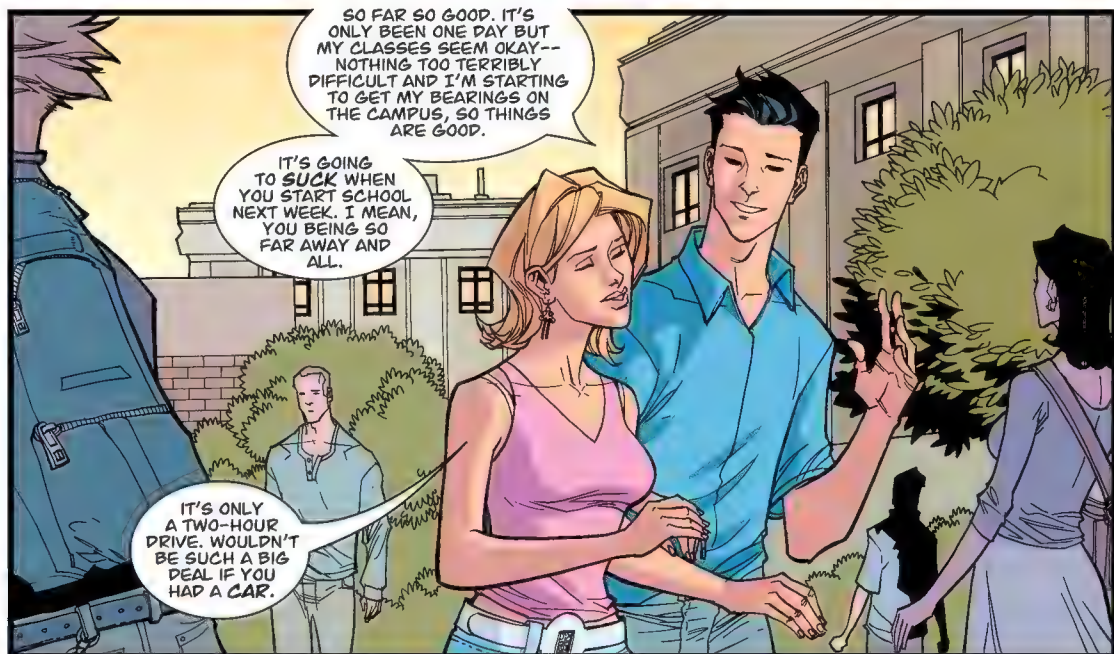


SIT  
DOWN.



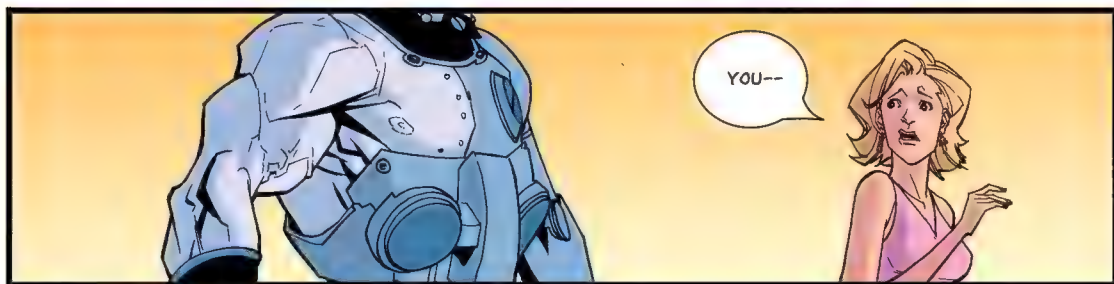
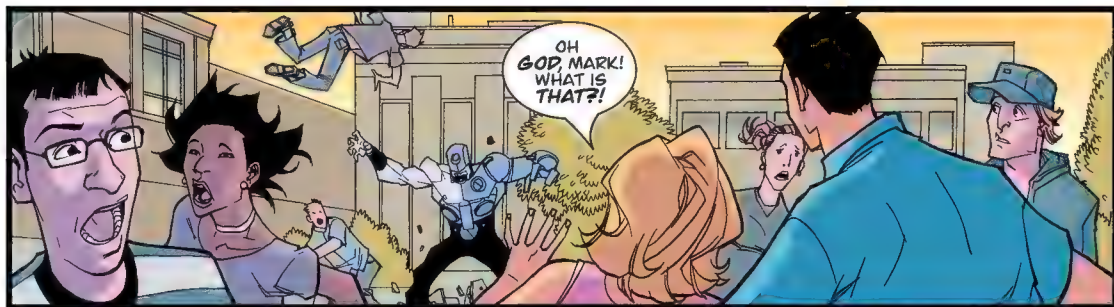
PLEASE.  
CALM  
YOURSELF.

I'M  
HERE TO  
LEARN.

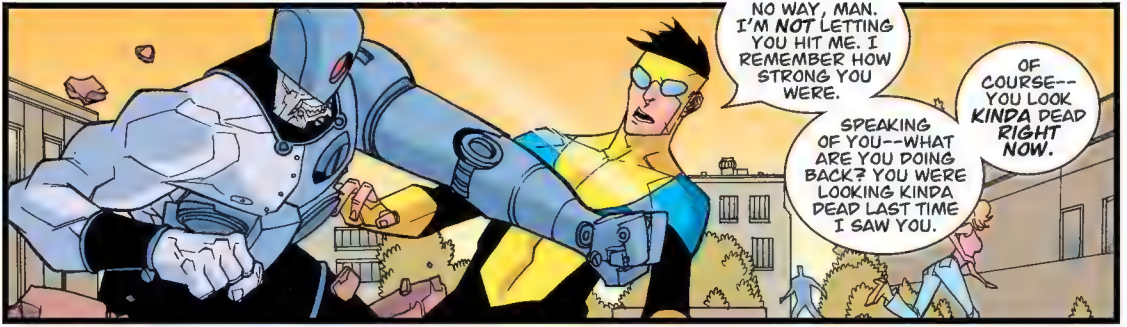








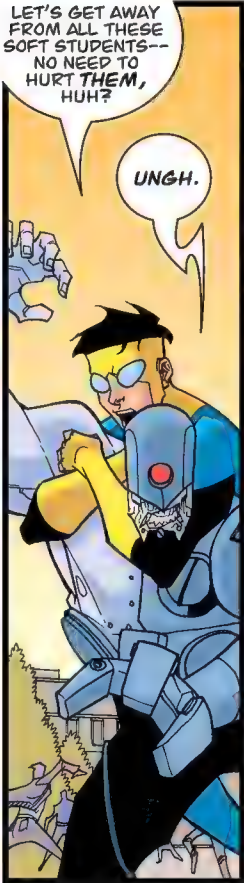




NO WAY, MAN.  
I'M NOT LETTING  
YOU HIT ME. I  
REMEMBER HOW  
STRONG YOU  
WERE.

SPEAKING  
OF YOU--WHAT  
ARE YOU DOING  
BACK? YOU WERE  
LOOKING KINDA  
DEAD LAST TIME  
I SAW YOU.

OF  
COURSE--  
YOU LOOK  
KINDA DEAD  
RIGHT  
NOW.

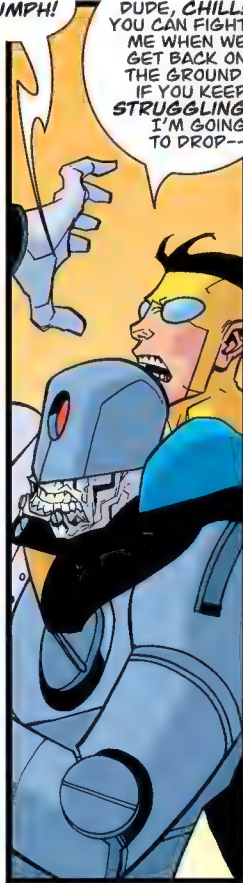


LET'S GET AWAY  
FROM ALL THESE  
SOFT STUDENTS--  
NO NEED TO  
HURT THEM,  
HUH?

UNGH.



WHAT  
WAS THAT?  
YOU TALK  
NOW?



MUMPH!

DUDE, CHILL!  
YOU CAN FIGHT  
ME WHEN WE  
GET BACK ON  
THE GROUND.  
IF YOU KEEP  
**STRUGGLING**  
I'M GOING  
TO DROP--

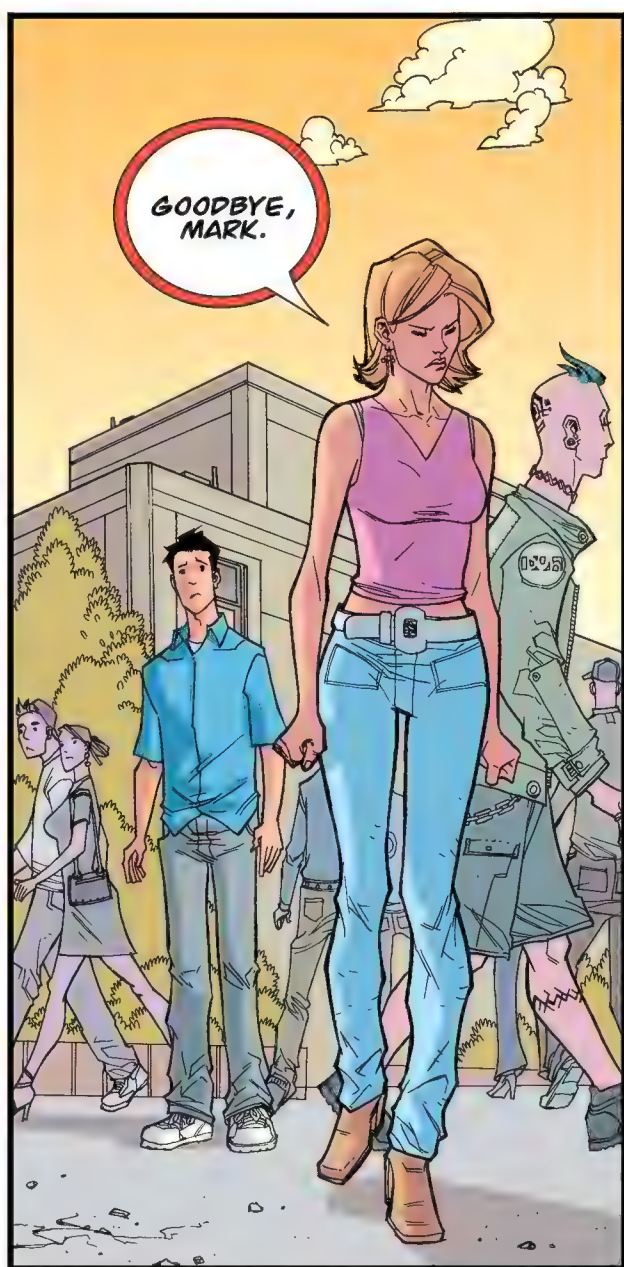
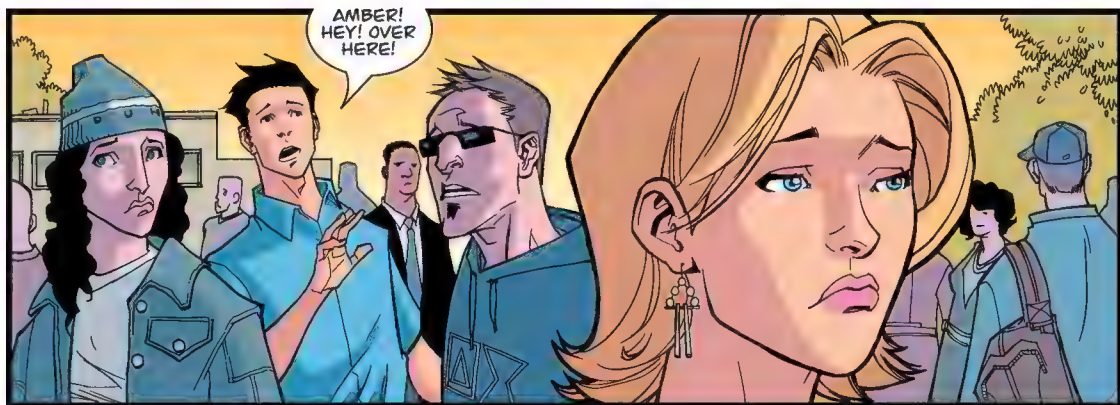


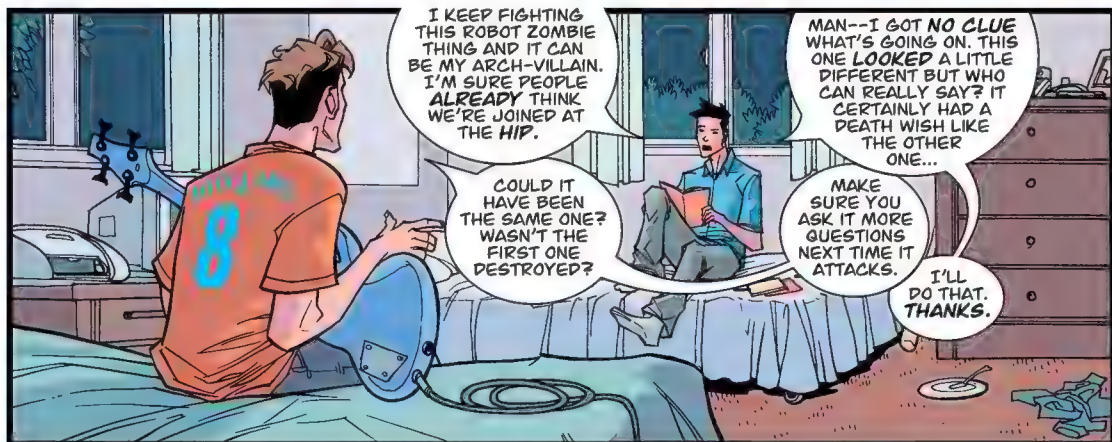
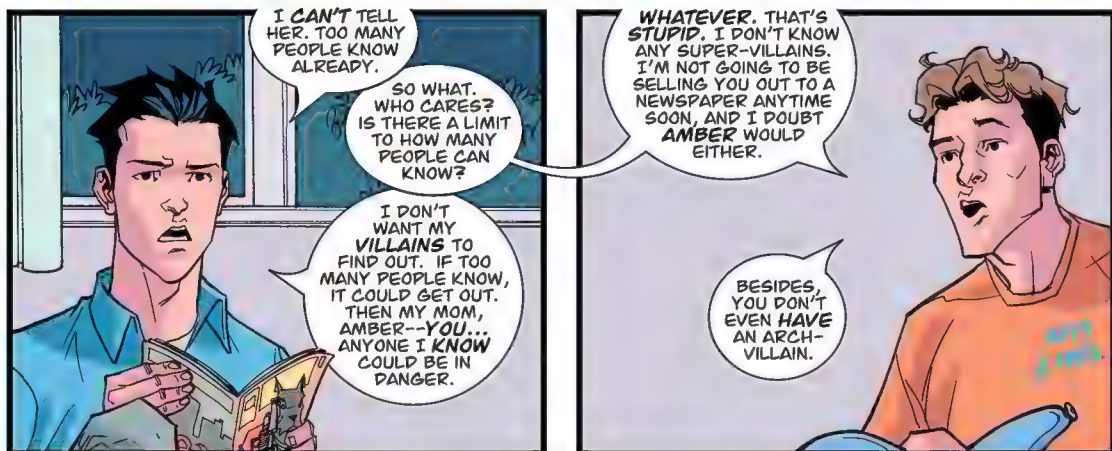
ACK!!

OKRIK!!

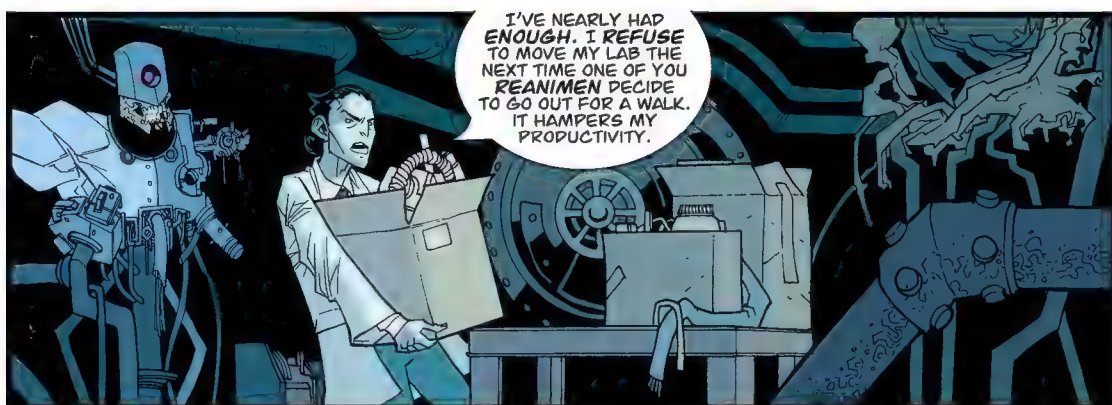
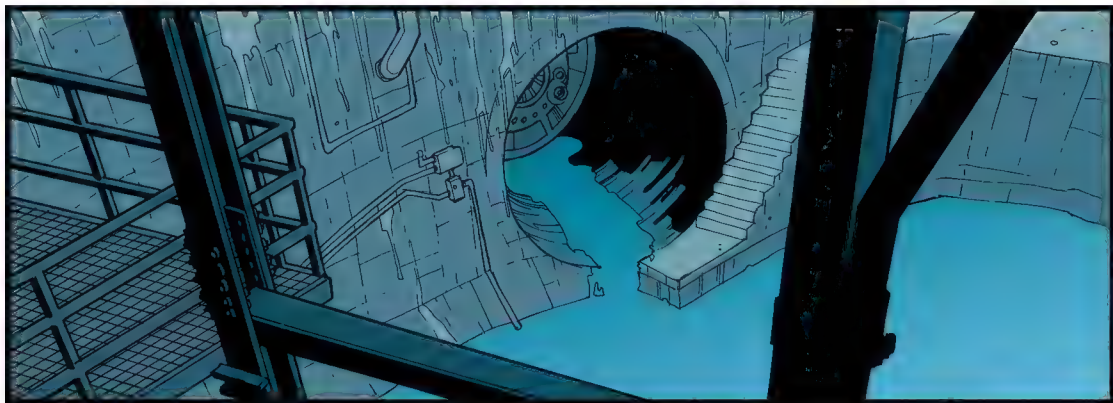


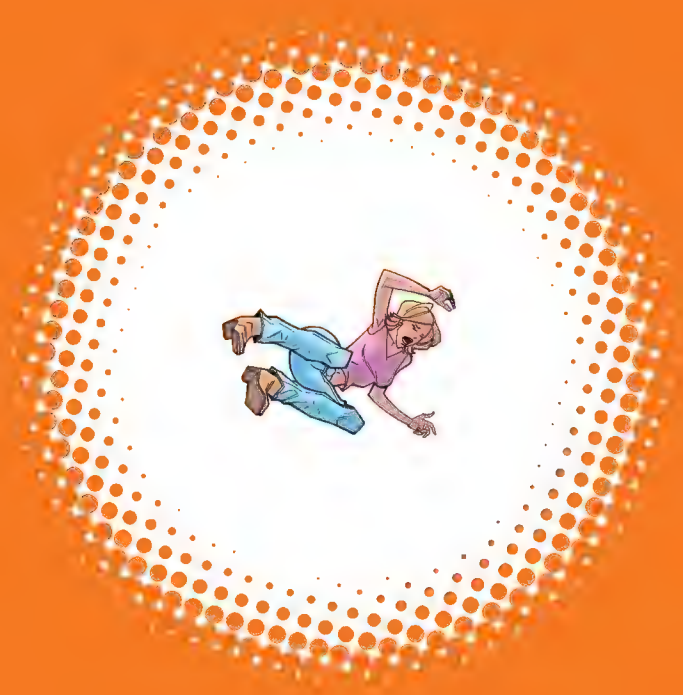








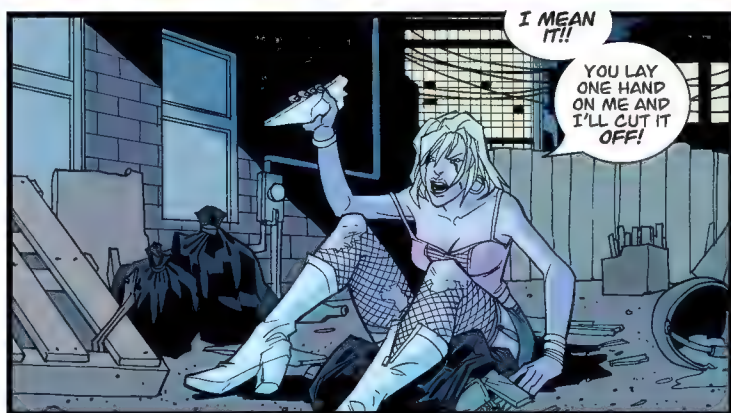






# CHAPTER TWO

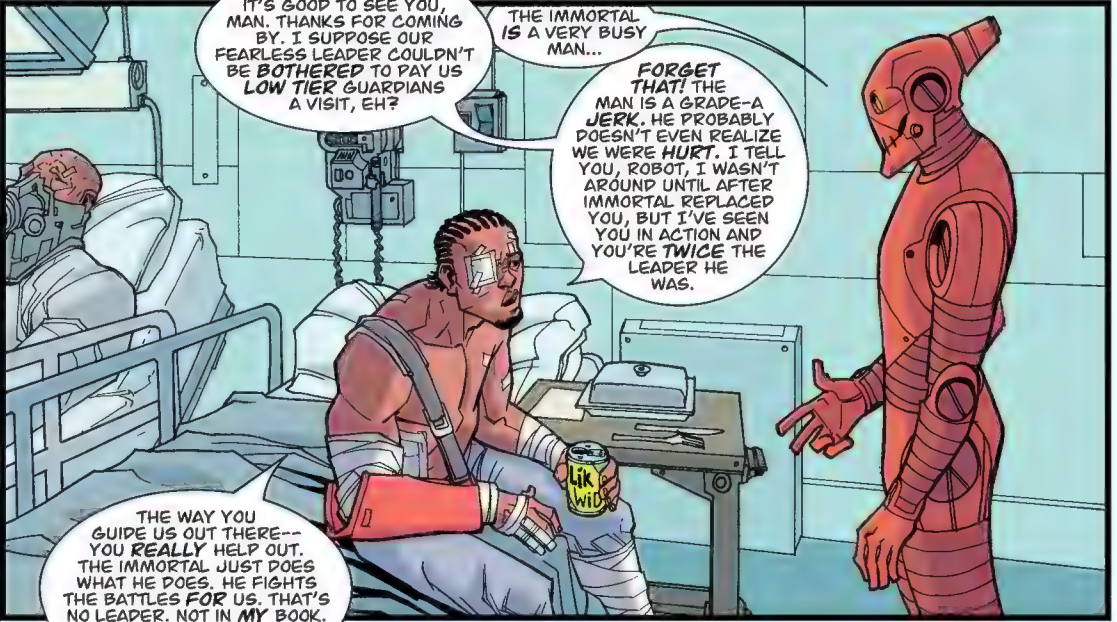
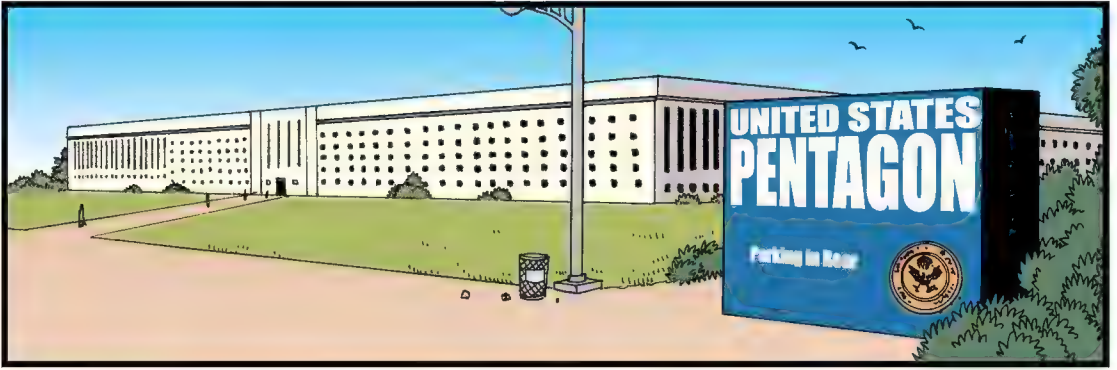




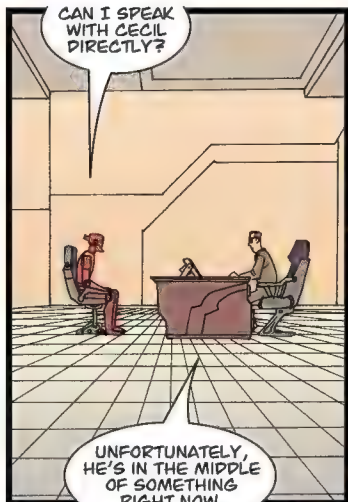
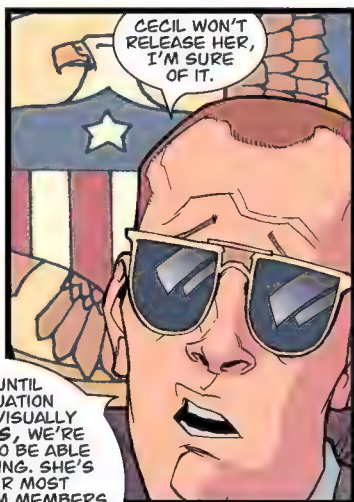
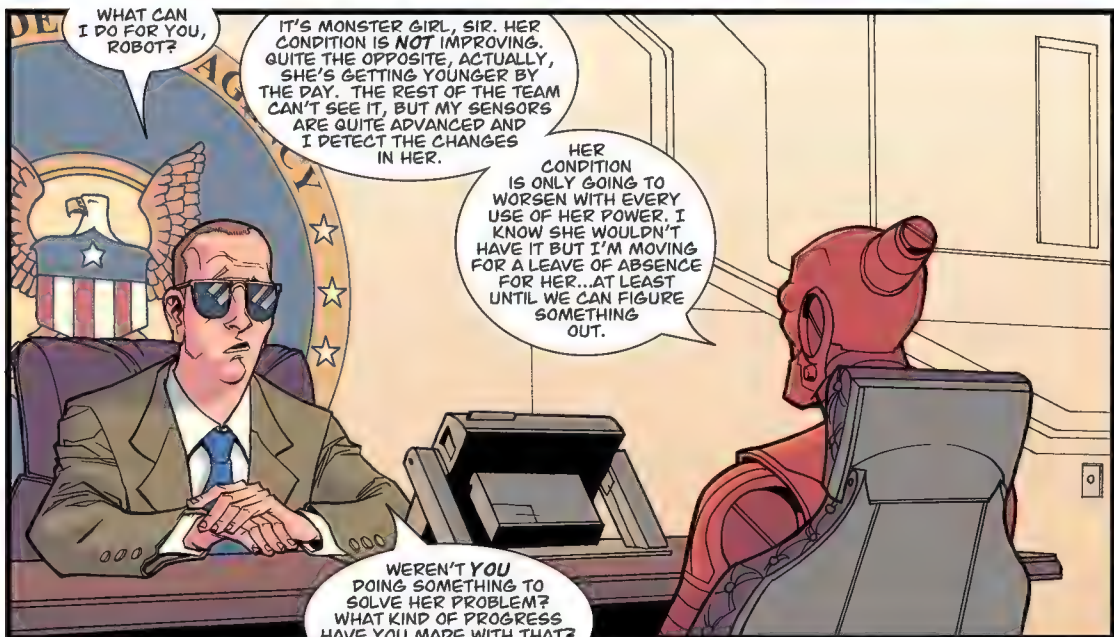
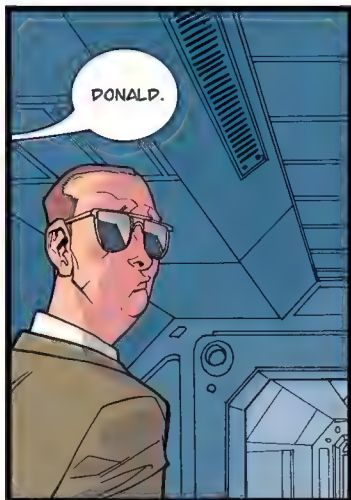




YOU  
WILL  
BE!





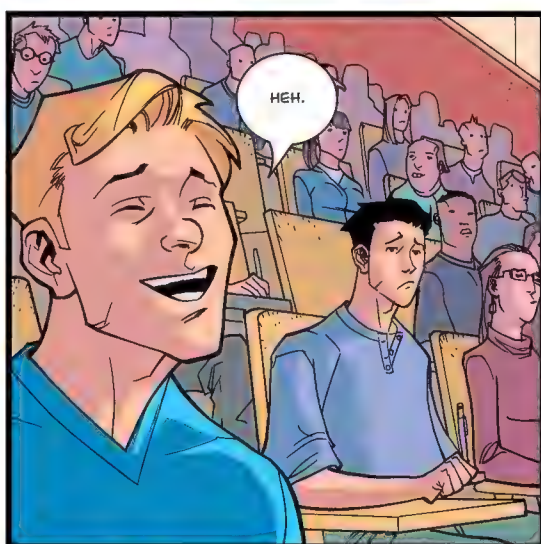








YES  
SIR.







I'M WORRIED. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE SHE CAME TO VISIT. Y'KNOW, WHEN I DITCHED HER TO GO FIGHT THAT BIG ROBOT THING? SHE THINKS I LEFT HER ALONE AND RAN FOR THE HILLS.



I'VE CALLED AMBER EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I'M WORRIED-- I'M WORRIED THAT IT'S OVER.

WELL, SHE IS AT COLLEGE NOW. I'M SURE SHE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF OTHER GUYS AROUND TO KEEP HER BUSY.



WAS THAT TOO INSENSITIVE? YEAH, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE, WASN'T IT?

SORRY.

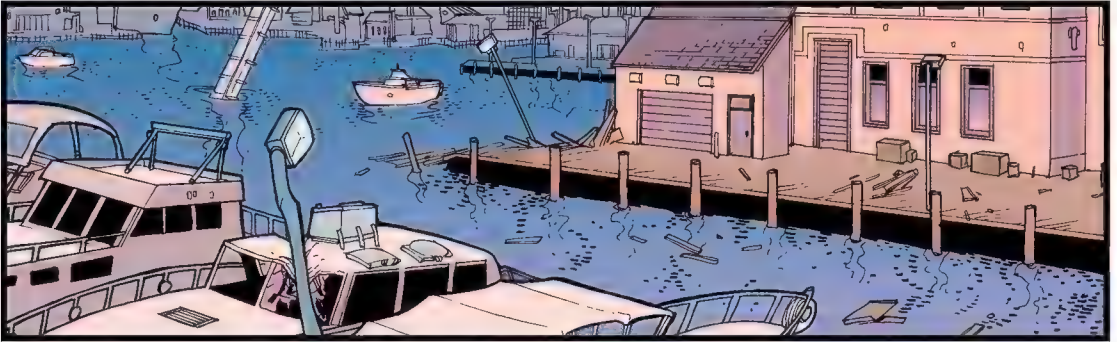


YEAH--THANKS FOR THAT. I'M GOING TO GO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS NOW.

I HOPE.

TELL EVE I SAID-- OH, SORRY. I FORGOT THAT SHE DUMPED YOU.

JERK.



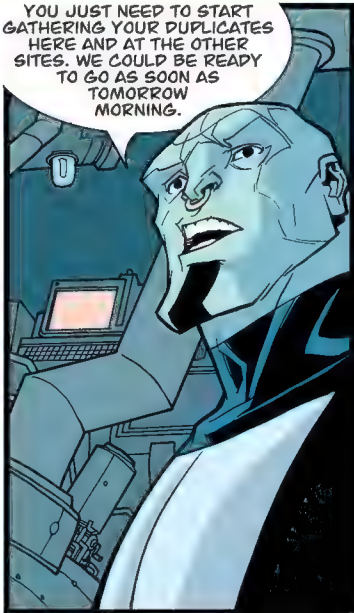
WHAT DID YOU WANT? YOU SAID YOU HAD SOME NEWS.

YES, ANGSTROM, I HAVE **NEWS**. **GOOD NEWS**. MY CLONE AND I ARE **DONE**. WE HAVE BUT A FEW MINOR COMPONENTS TO GET TONIGHT AND THEN WE'LL BE READY TO START THE PROCEDURE.

WE RAN OUT OF TRANSISTORS AND NEED A FEW MORE BEFORE WE CAN LINK ALL THE MACHINES IN THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS.



THAT IS **GOOD NEWS**, MAULER.



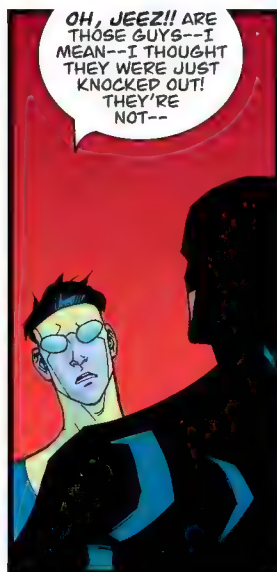
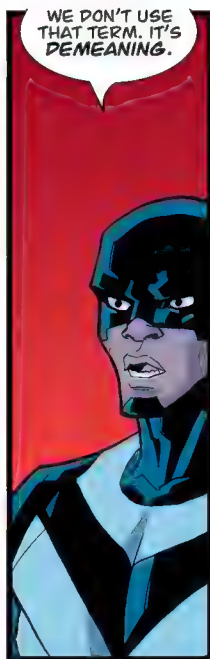
YOU JUST NEED TO START GATHERING YOUR DUPLICATES HERE AND AT THE OTHER SITES. WE COULD BE READY TO GO AS SOON AS TOMORROW MORNING.



I'LL GET STARTED AT ONCE.

















WELL, THEN--IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE GOT A DECISION TO MAKE. I GOTTA SAY, WHATEVER'S IN HERE--I THINK I'VE GOT A **MUCH** BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING IT THAN YOU DO.

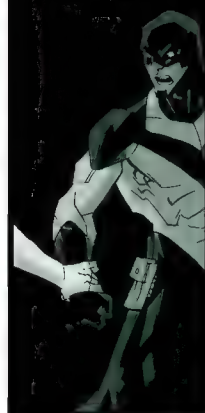
SO I DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT YOU DECIDE. TRUTH BE TOLD.



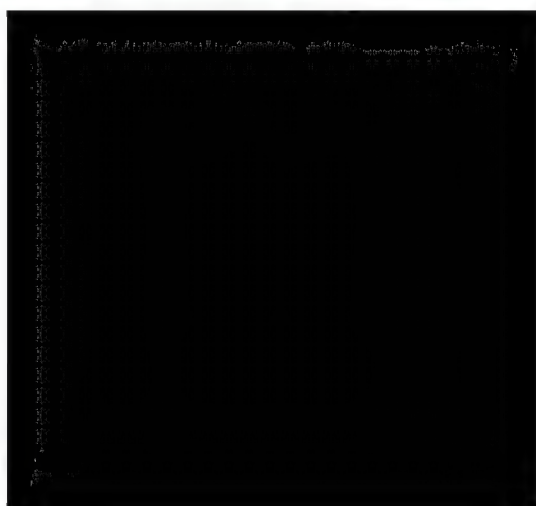
WELL, WINGY? WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?



C'MON.

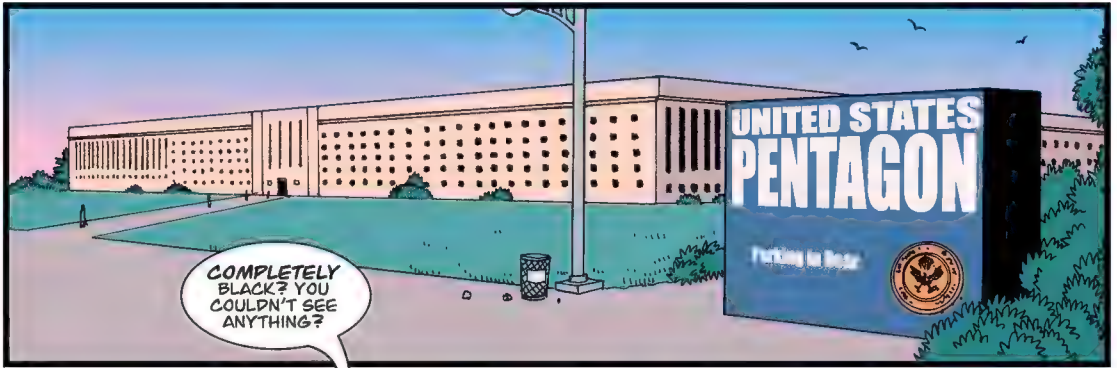


YOU BETTER HURRY. I THINK I HEARD SOMETHING.







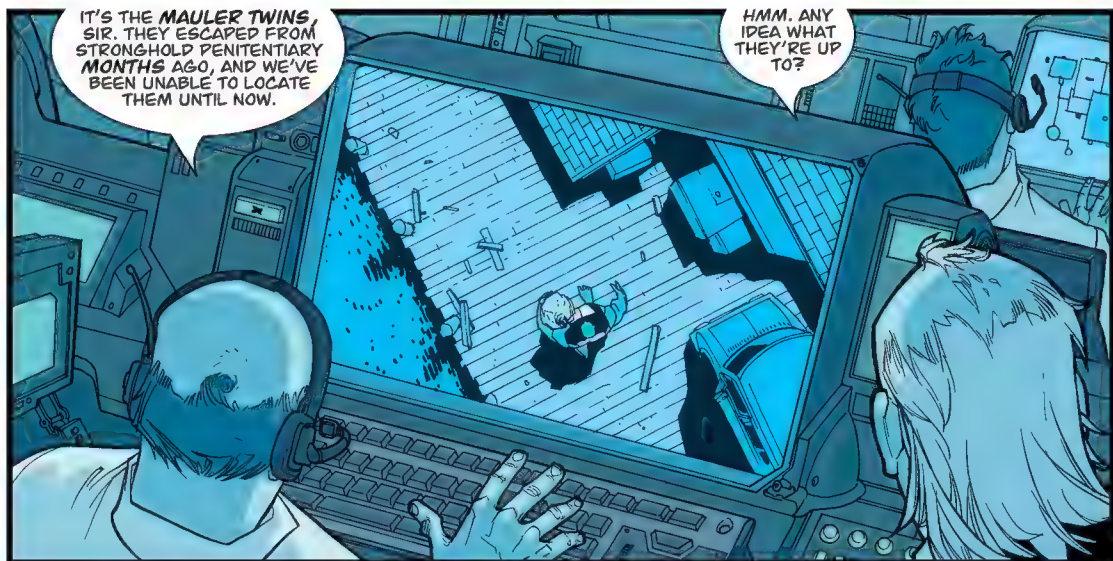






OKAY, PEOPLE. WHAT HAVE WE GOT?

OVER HERE, SIR.



IT'S THE MAULER TWINS, SIR. THEY ESCAPED FROM STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY MONTHS AGO, AND WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE THEM UNTIL NOW.

HMM. ANY IDEA WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?



WE RAN A BACK CHECK ON THIS LOCATION AND THEY'VE BEEN THERE PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY SINCE THEY ESCAPED. THEY'RE DEFINITELY UP TO SOMETHING.

AN INTERESTING SIDE NOTE TO THIS IS THAT AUTHORITIES WERE UNABLE TO DECIPHER HOW THEY ESCAPED. THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF ESCAPE-- THEY JUST VANISHED.

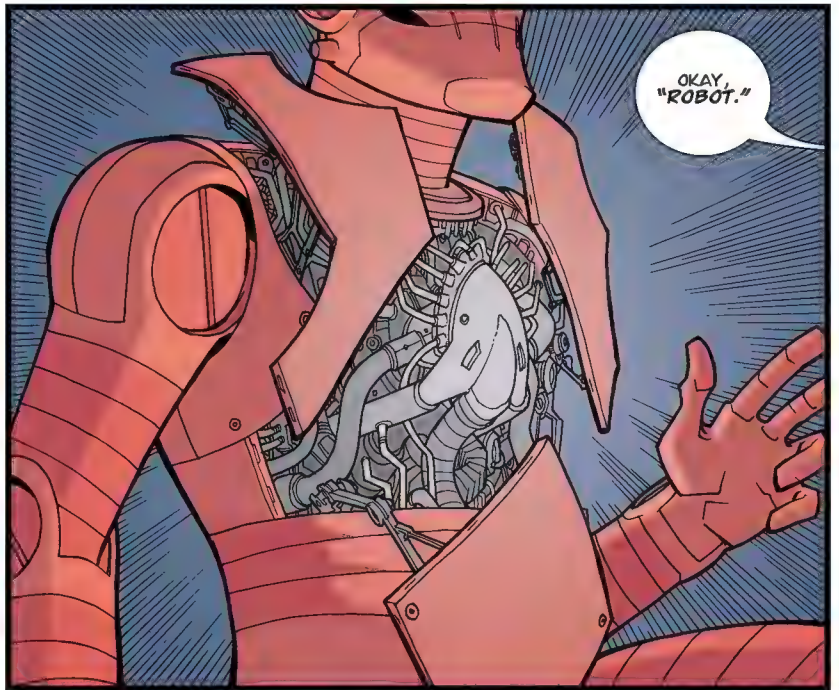
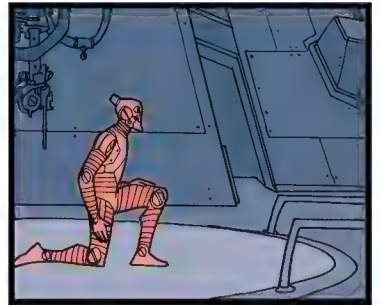
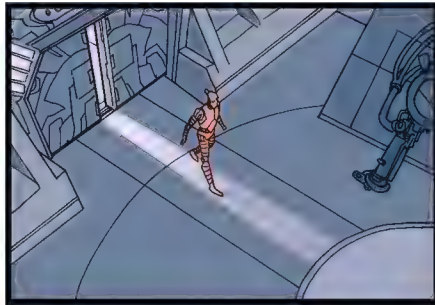
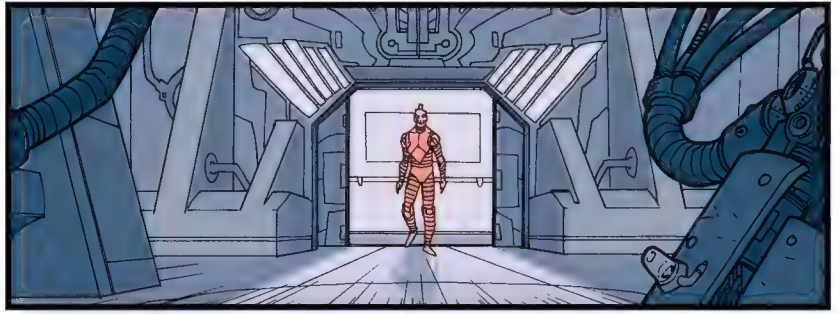
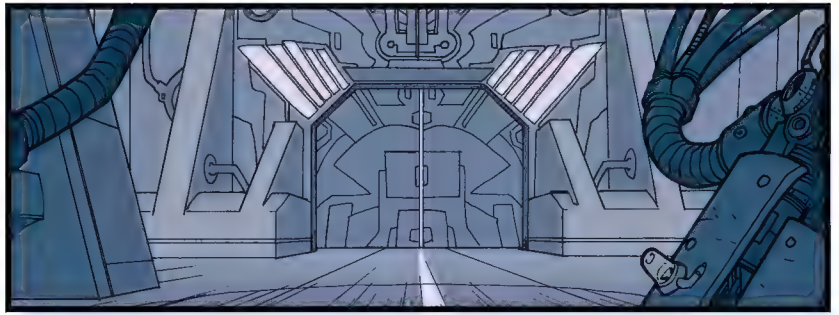


HMM. FOR NOW, WE WATCH. STICK TO THIS LOCATION LIKE GLUE. I DON'T WANT TO TIP OUR HAND UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

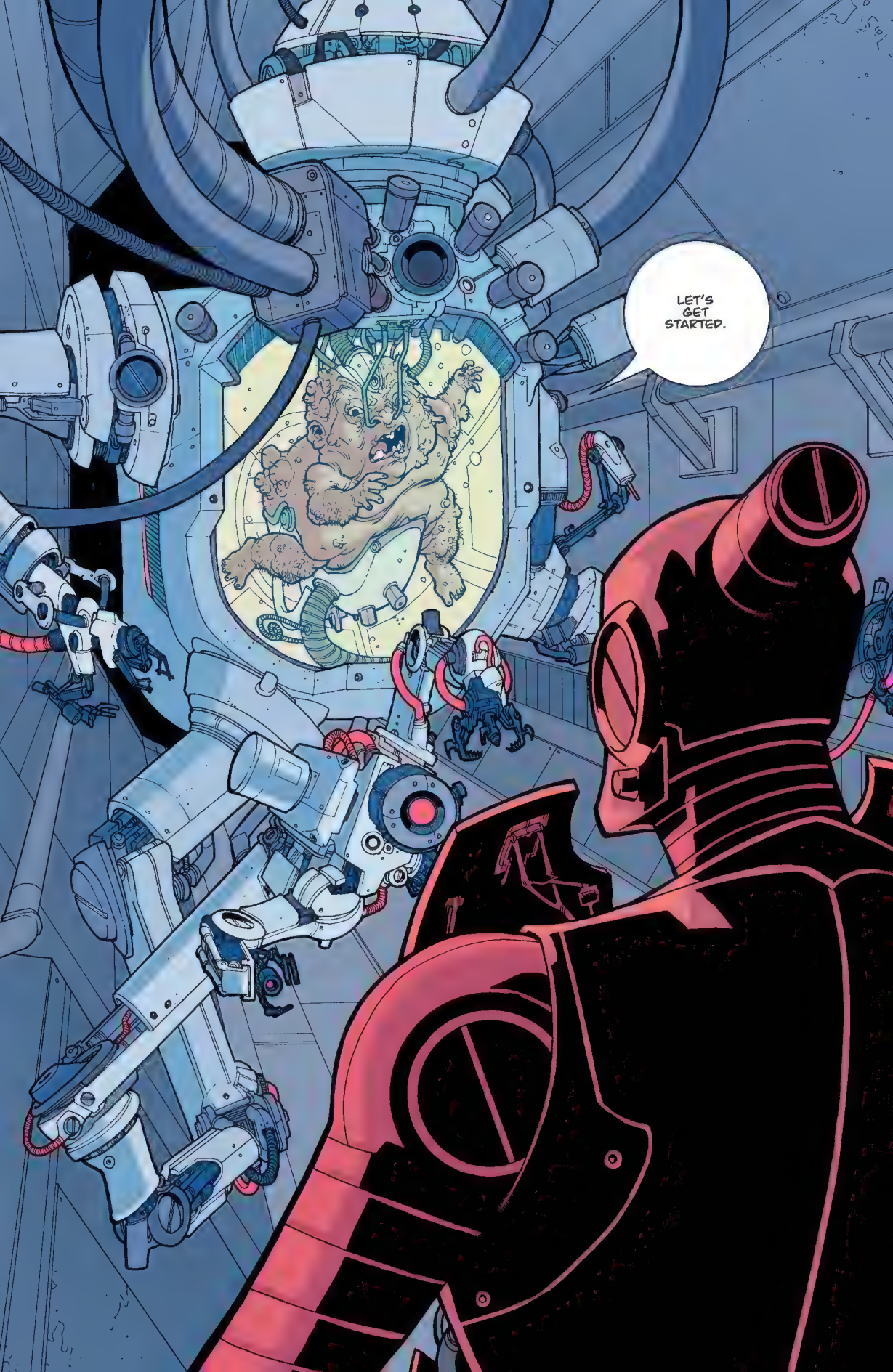
ALERT ME IMMEDIATELY IF THERE ARE ANY DEVELOPMENTS.



YES SIR, MISTER STEPMAN.





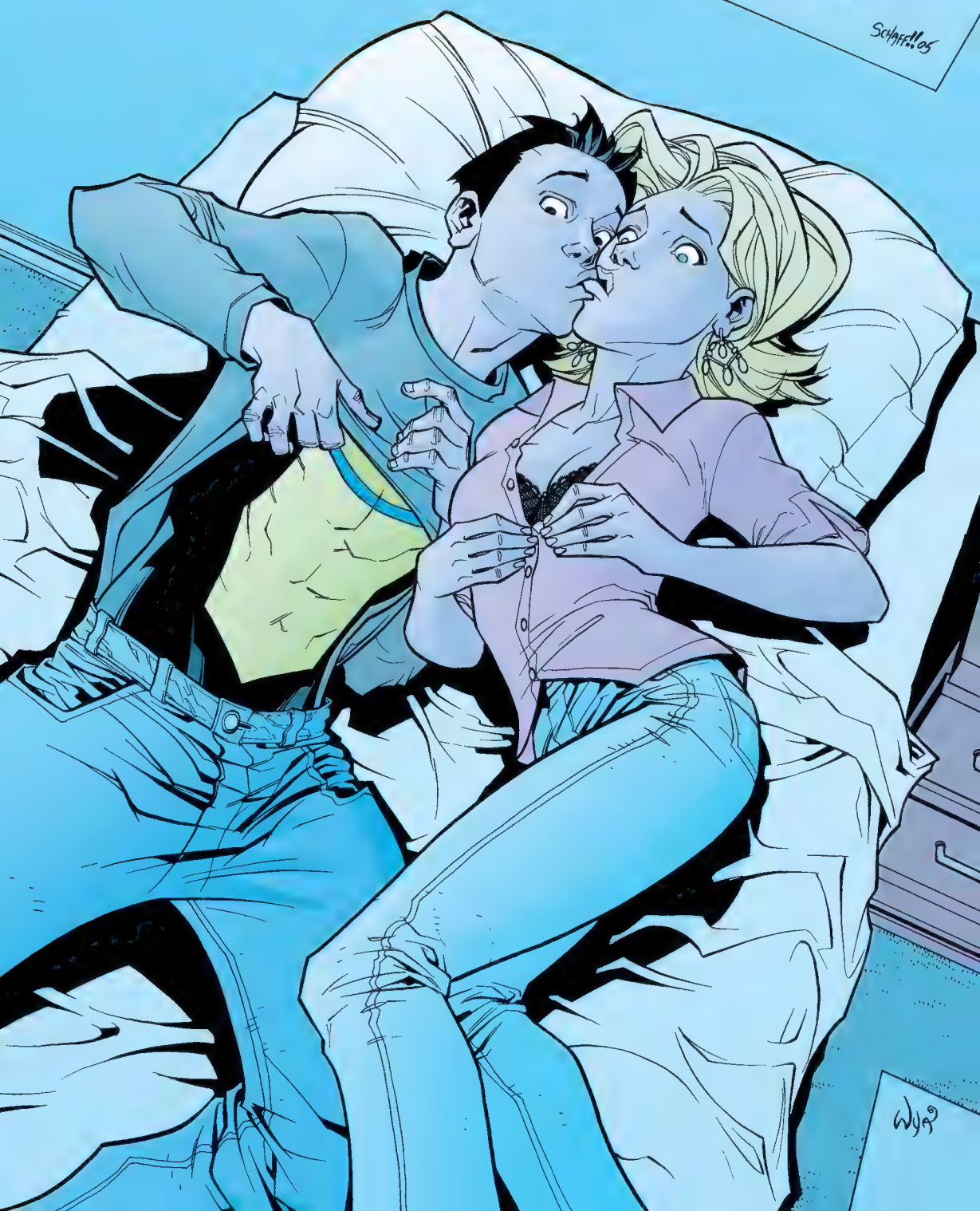


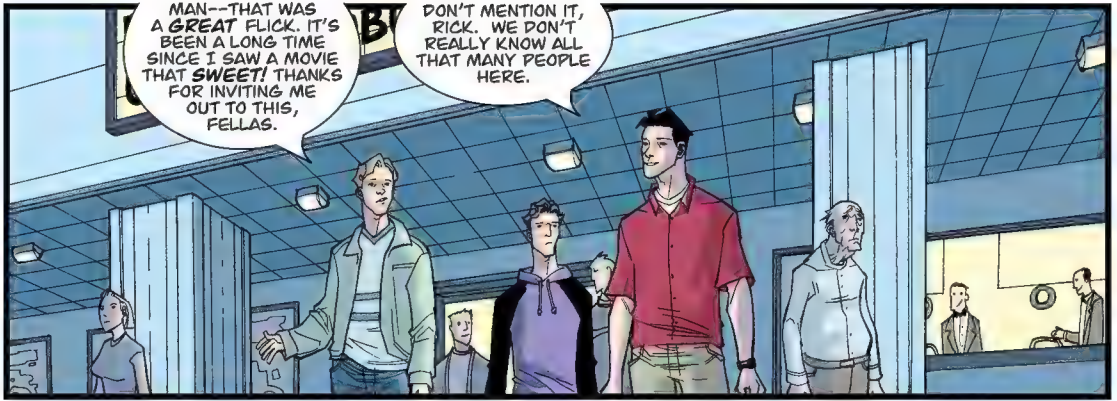
LET'S  
GET  
STARTED.





# CHAPTER THREE





MAN--THAT WAS A GREAT FLICK. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I SAW A MOVIE THAT **SWEET!** THANKS FOR INVITING ME OUT TO THIS, FELLAS.

DON'T MENTION IT, RICK. WE DON'T REALLY KNOW ALL THAT MANY PEOPLE HERE.

SERIOUSLY, THOUGH. MY ROOMMATE IS A REAL JERK. HE'S ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT HOW MUCH I SLEEP. IT'S REALLY CRAPPY LIVING WITH THE GUY--HE'S WORSE THAN MY FATHER.



IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM HIM.

YOU KEEP SLEEPING AS MUCH AS YOU DO, AND WE'LL GRADUATE BEFORE YOU.



YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. THANKS FOR THE ADVICE, BILLY.



VERY. FUNNY.



DID YOU FORGET WHO PROVE?

OH, LIGHTEN UP, WILLIAM. HE'S ONLY MESSING WITH YOU.



DON'T BE SO--



OH, CRUP! LOOK AT THE TIME! I GOTTA GO GUYS. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SOMEWHERE.

DO WE NEED TO DRIVE YOU?



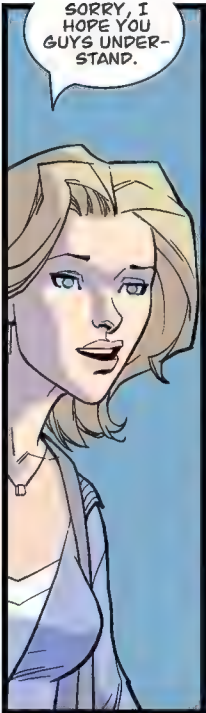
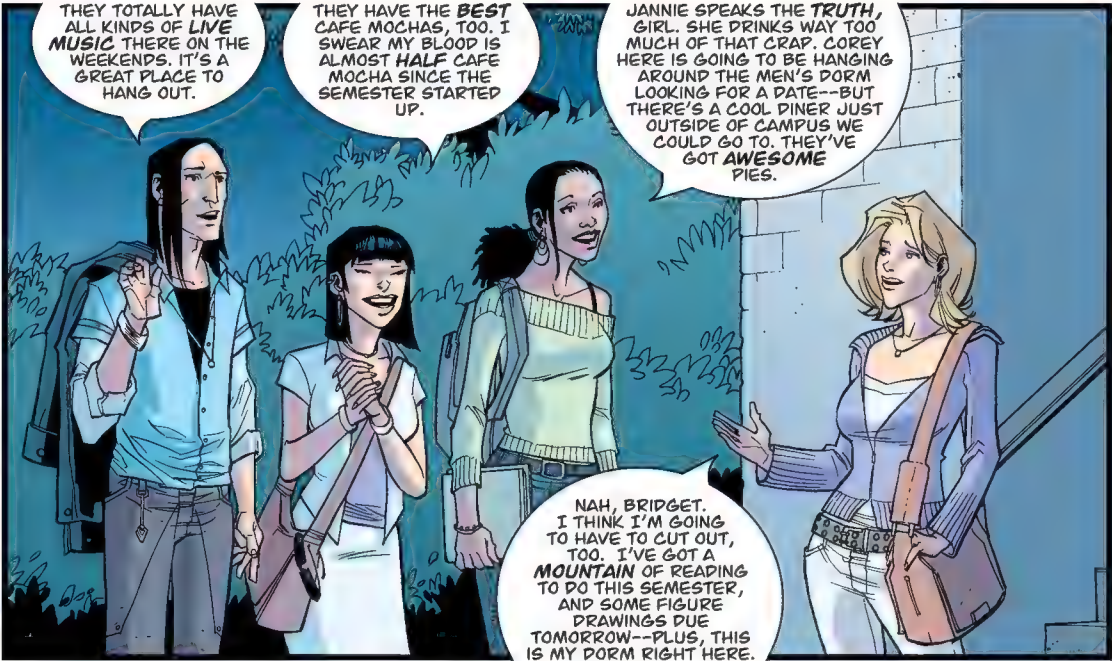
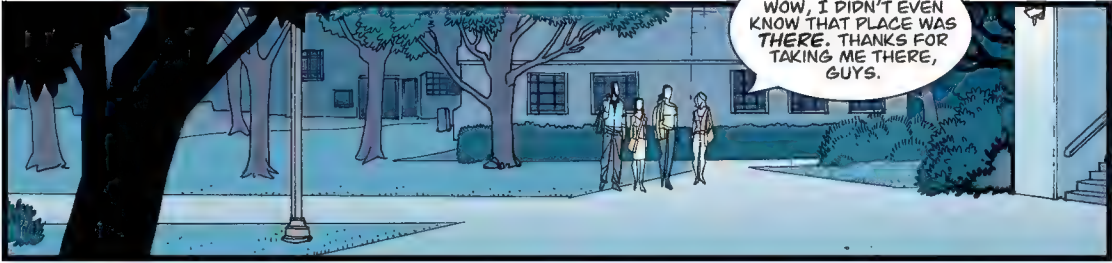
NO! I CAN WALK.

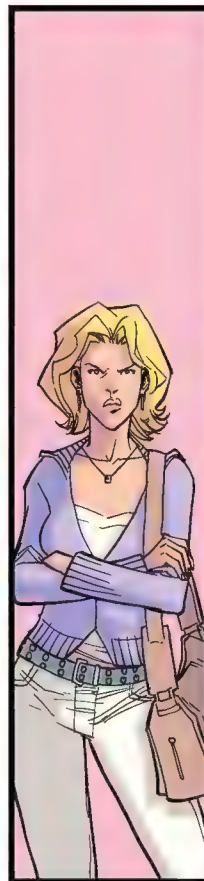
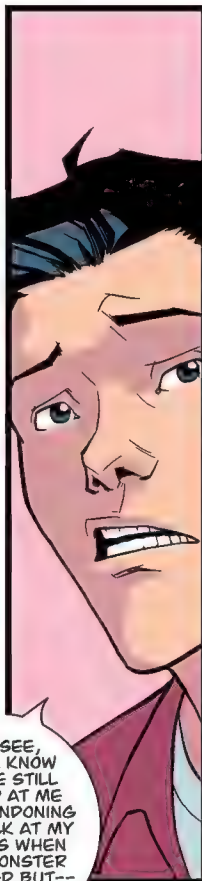
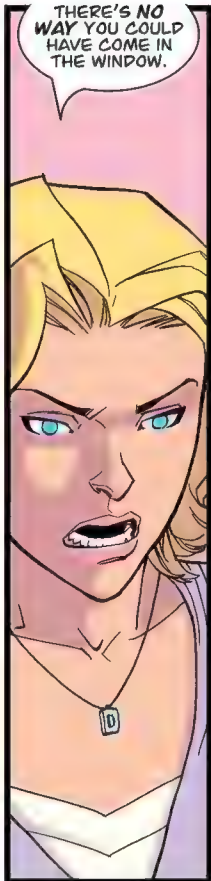
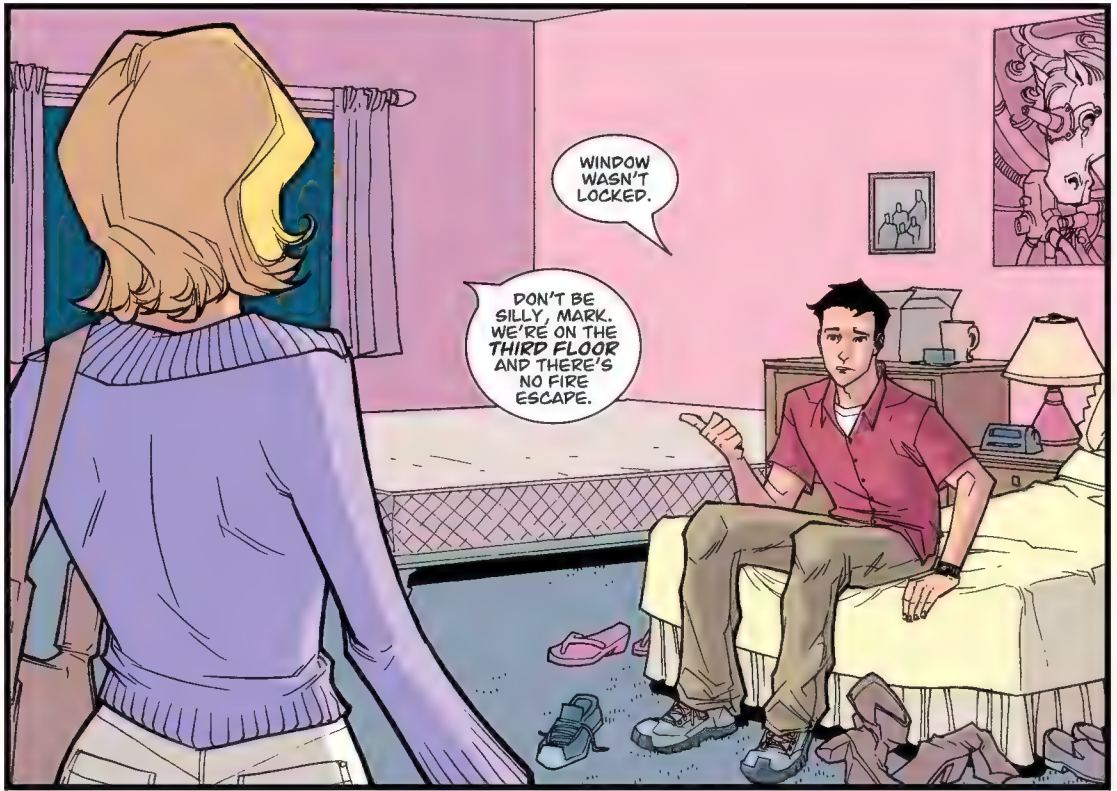


DOES HE ALWAYS WALK?

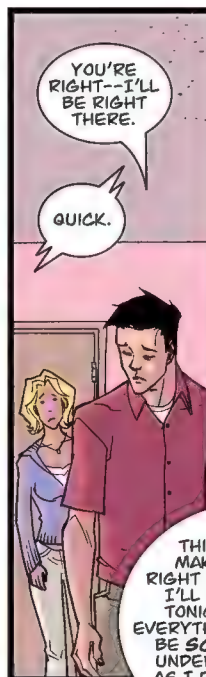
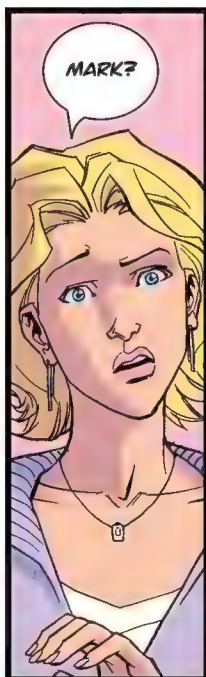
IT CERTAINLY SEEMS THAT WAY, DOESN'T IT?





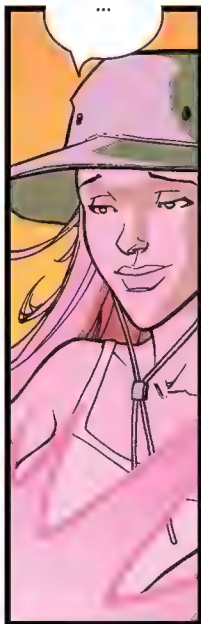
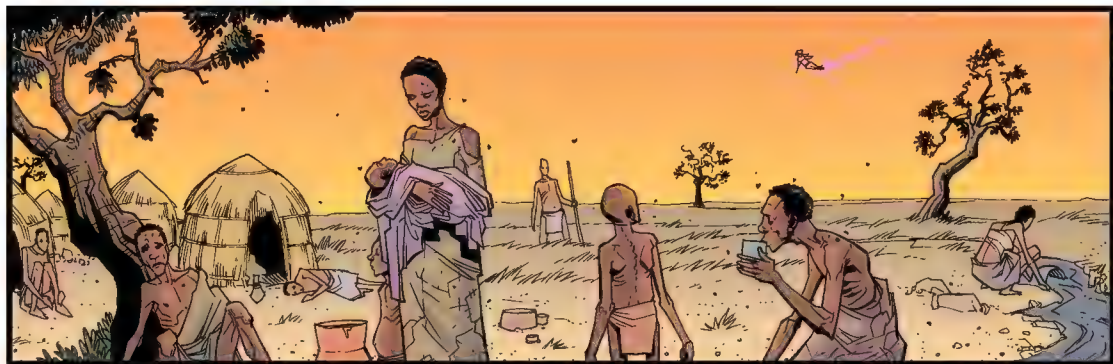


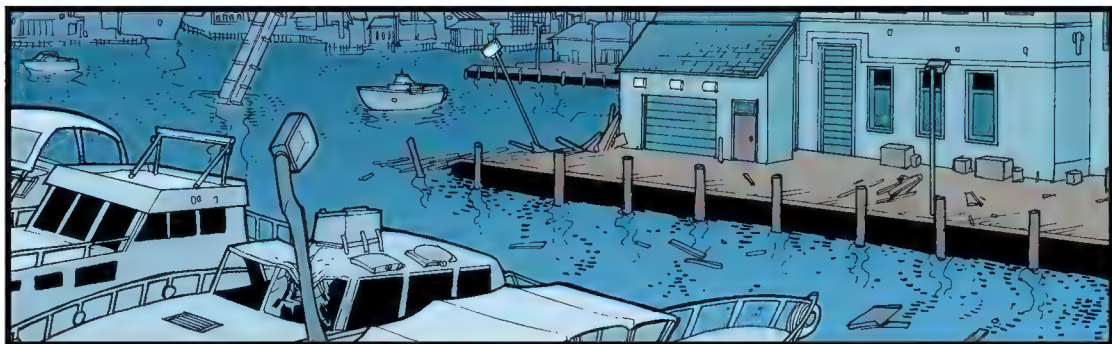












IT IS TIME, **ANGSTROM LEVY**.

WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. ALL THE MACHINES ACROSS THE **DOZEN** WORLDS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. I HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE **OTHERS** BROUGHT IN AFTER YESTERDAY'S SETBACK AND WE'RE ALL READY TO GO. THANKS FOR CONTACTING THEM FOR US, BY THE WAY. THEY'VE BEEN A **HUGE** HELP.

IF YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR DUPLICATES HERE TOMORROW MORNING--WE'LL COMPLETE THE PROCESS TOMORROW. WE COULD BE DONE BY LUNCH-TIME. THIS TIME FOR **SURE**.

BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DIMENSIONS WILL BE YOURS--AND YOU'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT HAVING TO RISK ENTERING A WORLD TOO HARSH TO SURVIVE IN.

I TAKE IT YOU ARE **PLEASED?**







HI, BRIDGET, THANKS FOR COMING.

NO SWEAT, SISTER. YOU DECIDE AGAINST THE HOMEWORK TONIGHT?



NO, IT--I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF.

WHAT'S WITH THE EMPTY BED? YOUR ROOMMATE DIE?

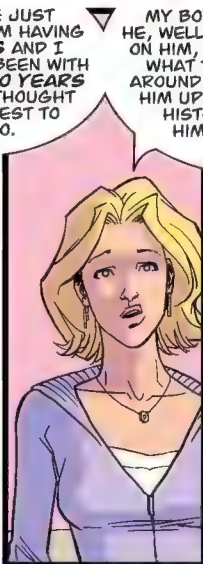


DROPPED OUT, COULDN'T GET FUNDING--SOMETHING. BUT ANYWAY, I REALLY WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.

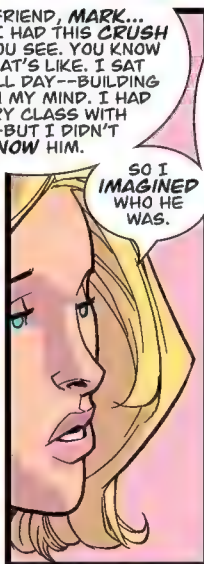
THEN SPIT IT OUT, GIRL. I'M ALL EARS.



I KNOW WE JUST MET--BUT I'M HAVING PROBLEMS AND I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN WITH PAUL FOR TWO YEARS AND I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D BE BEST TO TALK TO.



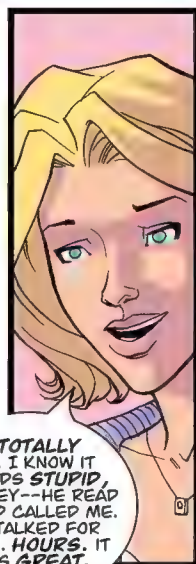
MY BOYFRIEND, MARK... HE, WELL. I HAD THIS CRUSH ON HIM, YOU SEE. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE. I SAT AROUND ALL DAY--BUILDING HIM UP IN MY MIND. I HAD HISTORY CLASS WITH HIM--BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HIM.



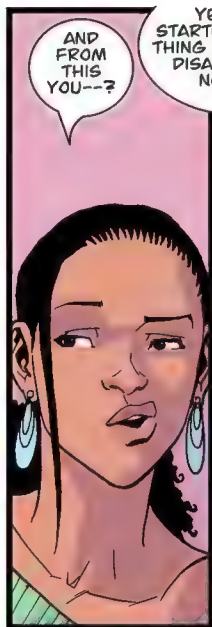
SO I IMAGINED WHO HE WAS.



I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW HE WOULD REPLY TO THINGS I COULD SAY TO HIM. I IMAGINED WHAT HE DID FOR FUN. I MADE HIM IN MY HEAD TO BE THIS GREAT GUY--THEN I GAVE HIM A NOTE.



I TOTALLY DID. I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT HEY--HE READ IT, AND CALLED ME. WE TALKED FOR LIKE... HOURS. IT WAS GREAT.



AND FROM THIS YOU--?

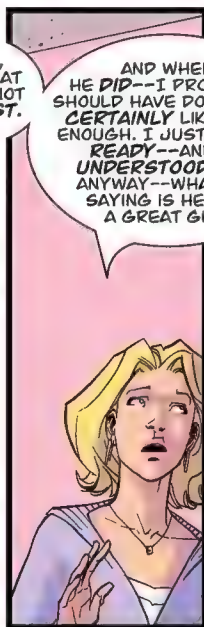
YEAH, WE STARTED DATING. THING IS, I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED, NOT ONE BIT.



HE WAS EVERYTHING I IMAGINED HE WAS AND MORE. HE WAS GREAT. HE WAS KIND, CONSIDERATE, SWEET--EVERYTHING. HE WASN'T TRYING TO GET INTO MY PANTS.



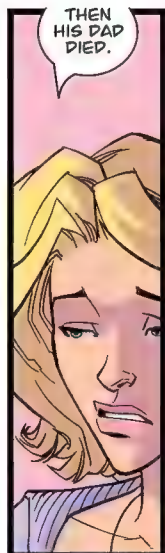
OKAY, OKAY--AT LEAST NOT AT FIRST.



AND WHEN HE DID--I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT... I CERTAINLY LIKED HIM ENOUGH. I JUST WASN'T READY--AND HE UNDERSTOOD. BUT ANYWAY--WHAT I'M SAYING IS HE WAS A GREAT GUY.



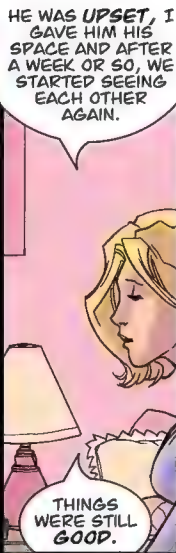
AND THEN...?



THEN HIS DAD DIED.

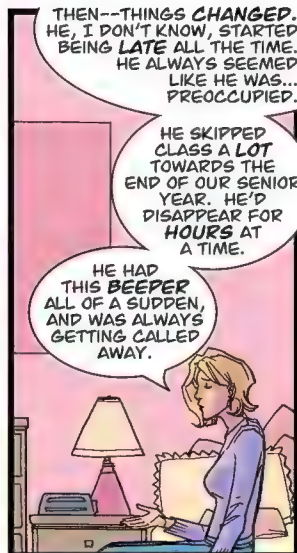


IT'S NOT WHAT YOU **THINK**-- I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT **THAT**. THAT WOULD BE A HORRIBLE THING TO DO. IT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK. HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THEN HE CAME BACK.



HE WAS UPSET, I GAVE HIM HIS SPACE AND AFTER A WEEK OR SO, WE STARTED SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.

THINGS WERE STILL GOOD.



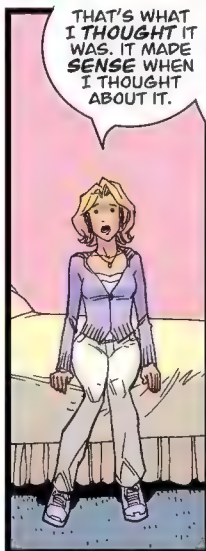
THEN--THINGS CHANGED. HE, I DON'T KNOW, STARTED BEING LATE ALL THE TIME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE HE WAS... PREOCCUPIED.

HE SKIPPED CLASS A LOT TOWARDS THE END OF OUR SENIOR YEAR. HE'D DISAPPEAR FOR HOURS AT A TIME.

HE HAD THIS BEEPER ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND WAS ALWAYS GETTING CALLED AWAY.



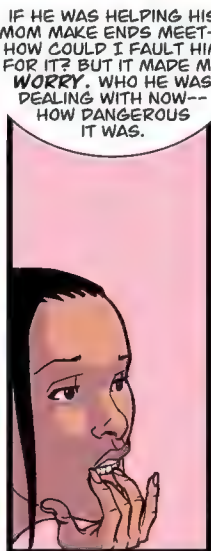
DRUGS?



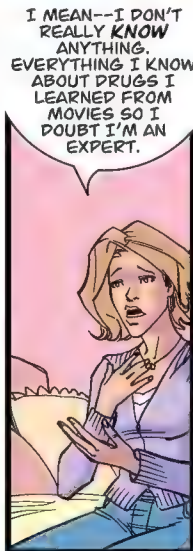
THAT'S WHAT I **THOUGHT** IT WAS. IT MADE **SENSE** WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.



HIS DAD DIED. IT WAS JUST HIM AND HIS MOM. I COULD SEE THEY NEEDED AN EXTRA INCOME. HIS DAD WAS AN AUTHOR, AND SALES PICKED UP WHEN HE DIED, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HE GOT.



IF HE WAS HELPING HIS MOM MAKE ENDS MEET-- HOW COULD I FAULT HIM FOR IT? BUT IT MADE ME **WORRY**. WHO HE WAS DEALING WITH NOW-- HOW DANGEROUS IT WAS.



I MEAN--I DON'T REALLY **KNOW** ANYTHING. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT DRUGS I LEARNED FROM MOVIES SO I DOUBT I'M AN EXPERT.

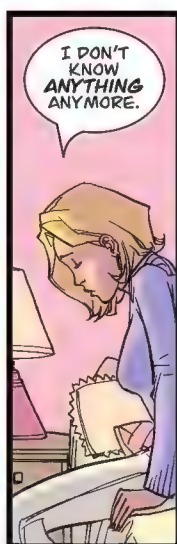


DON'T LOOK AT ME--THAT'S RACIST.

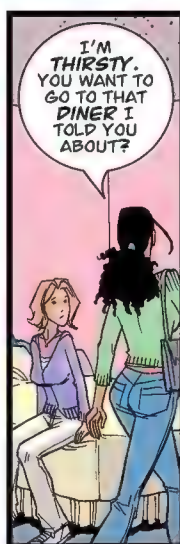
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING **ETHER**. MY PARENTS ARE **DOCTORS**. YOU DIDN'T CALL THE BLACK GIRL TO GET **DRUG INFO** DID YOU?



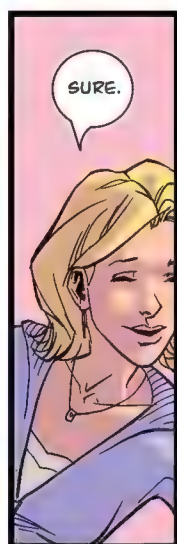
NO--NO! IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL! I DIDN'T CALL YOU TO TALK ABOUT **THAT**. I DON'T KNOW THAT HE WAS EVER SELLING DRUGS... I DON'T KNOW **WHAT'S** GOING ON.



I DON'T KNOW **ANYTHING** ANYMORE.

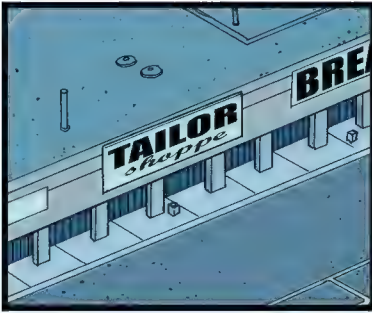


I'M **THIRSTY**. YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT **DINER** I TOLD YOU ABOUT?

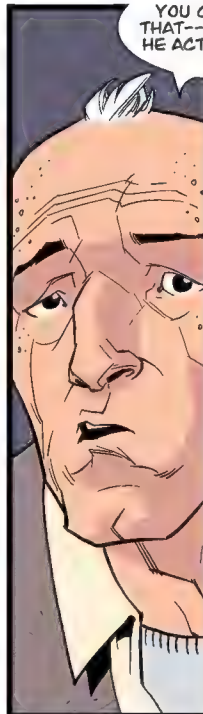
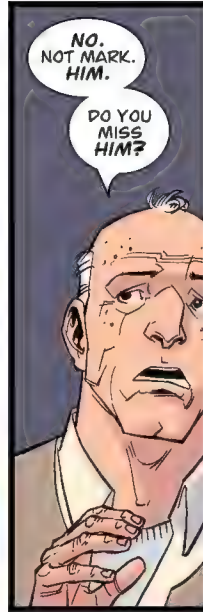


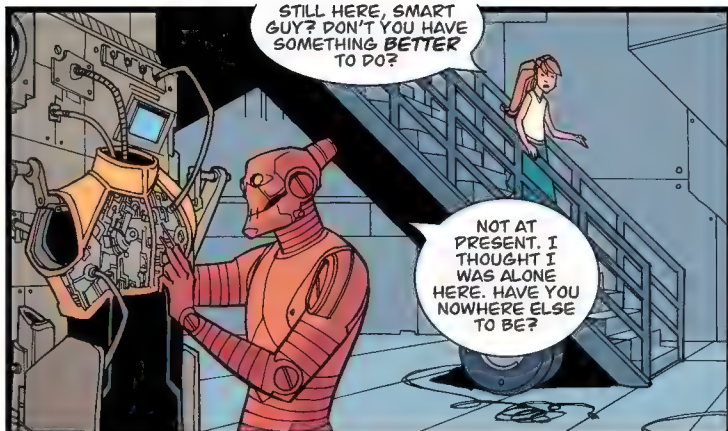
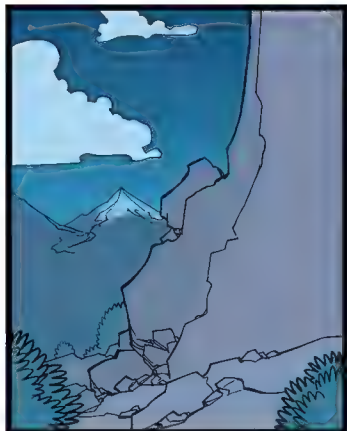
SURE.



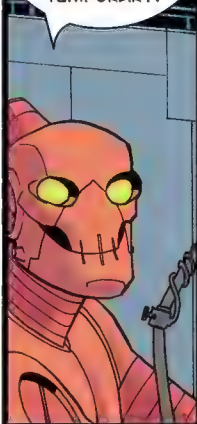


I DON'T CARE WHERE I WORK. I JUST--I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO. WITH MARK AWAY AT SCHOOL I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO.



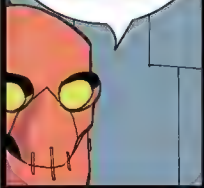


I AM STILL HARD AT WORK ON A SOLUTION TO YOUR CONDITION. I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND ONE, ALTHOUGH IT'S TEMPORARY.



YES. WITH **BLACK SAMPSON** STILL IN A **COMA**, I THOUGHT HIS ARMOR MIGHT BE ALTERED TO ALLOW YOU TO WEAR IT.

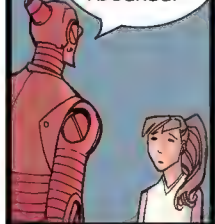
YOU POSSESS THE SAME FIGHTING SKILLS IN THIS FORM AS YOUR MONSTER FORM-- YOU JUST LACK THE **STRENGTH**. THE SUIT COULD--IT COULD--PROVIDE STRENGTH WITHOUT STUNTING YOUR AGING ANY FURTHER.



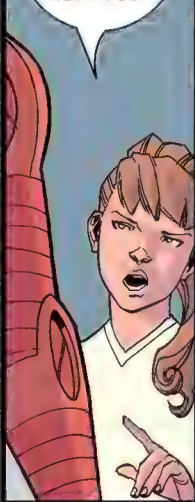
IF THAT IS YOUR WISH, I WOULD BE **HAPPY** TO.

YOU WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO TURN INTO YOUR MONSTER FORM IF YOU WERE IN ANY DANGER IN THE SUIT--IF THINGS GOT BAD--YOU COULD CHANGE--BUT THEORETICALLY YOU WOULD USE YOUR POWERS **MUCH** LESS.

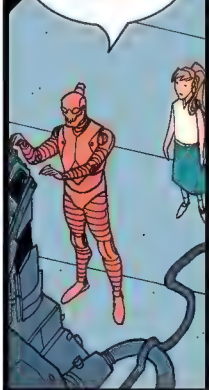
IT'S THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN COME UP WITH-- CONSIDERING **Cecil** DENIED YOU A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.



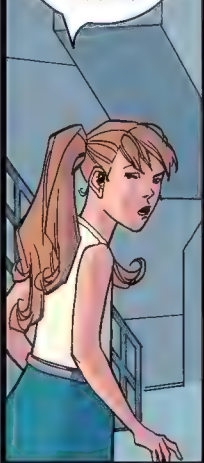
WHAT'S UP? YOU'RE ACTING DIFFERENT-- YOU'RE ACTING **NERVOUS**.



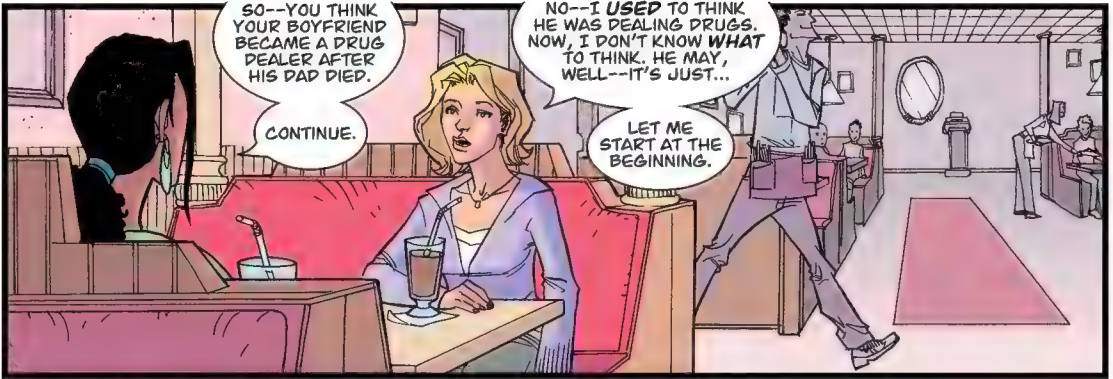
THAT IS **IMPOSSIBLE**. I LACK THE ABILITY TO BE NERVOUS.



WELL-- **SOMETHING** IS GOING ON. YOU'RE NOT ACTING **NORMAL**.







SO--YOU THINK YOUR BOYFRIEND BECAME A DRUG DEALER AFTER HIS DAD DIED.

CONTINUE.

NO--I USED TO THINK HE WAS DEALING DRUGS. NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. HE MAY, WELL--IT'S JUST...

LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING.

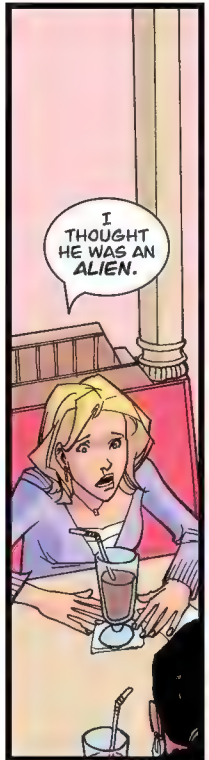
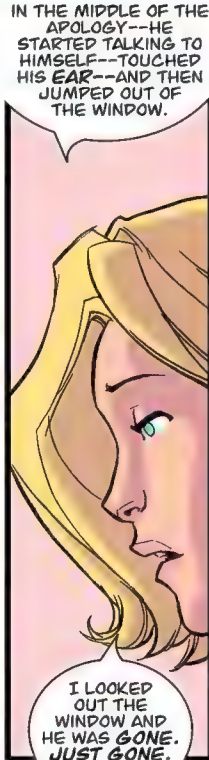
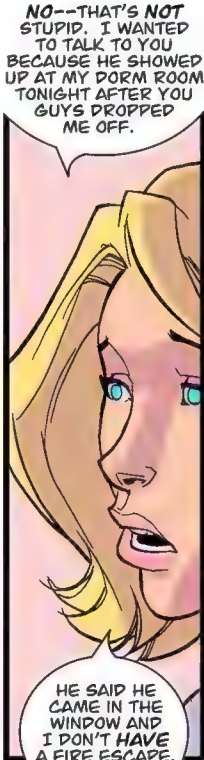
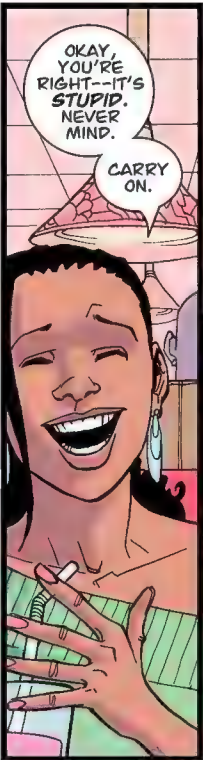
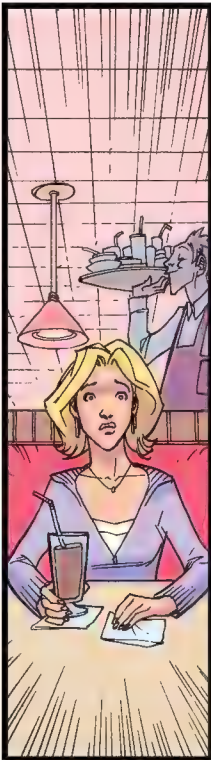
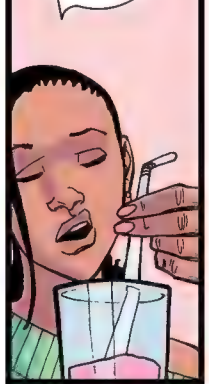
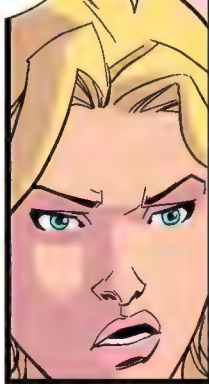
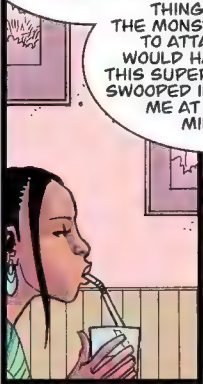
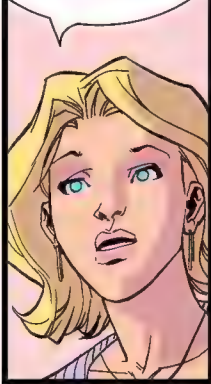
SEE, HIS SEMESTER STARTED BEFORE MINE. I VISITED HIM ON CAMPUS ON HIS FIRST DAY. THIS MONSTER ATTACKED THE STUDENTS.

IT WAS TEARING THE PLACE UP, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING AROUND IN EVERY DIRECTION TRYING TO GET AWAY. THEN, I TURN AROUND--AND MARK'S GONE.

THEN--AFTER THE SUPERHERO FLIES OFF WITH THE MONSTER AND EVERYONE IS SAFE... MARK COMES RUNNING UP--TELLING ME HOW WORRIED HE WAS.

THE JERK.

MAYBE HE'S THE SUPER-HERO.



OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT--IT'S STUPID. NEVER MIND.

CARRY ON.

NO--THAT'S NOT STUPID. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BECAUSE HE SHOWED UP AT MY DORM ROOM TONIGHT AFTER YOU GUYS DROPPED ME OFF.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APOLOGY--HE STARTED TALKING TO HIMSELF--TOUCHED HIS EAR--AND THEN JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW.

I THOUGHT HE WAS AN ALIEN.

HE SAID HE CAME IN THE WINDOW AND I DON'T HAVE A FIRE ESCAPE.

I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND HE WAS GONE. JUST GONE.



OUT THE WINDOW?  
TALKING TO HIMSELF?

YEAH--  
HE'S A SUPER-  
HERO.

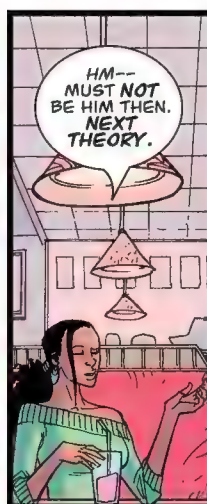


NO--HE CAN'T BE.  
THE ONE THAT SAVED  
ME WAS THAT KID--  
**INVINCIBLE.**  
THE NEW ONE. HE HAD  
THAT BIG FIGHT WITH  
HIS EVIL SUPERHERO  
DAD. REMEMBER?  
IT WAS ON THE NEWS.

IT  
HAPPENED  
RIGHT AROUND  
THE TIME THAT--



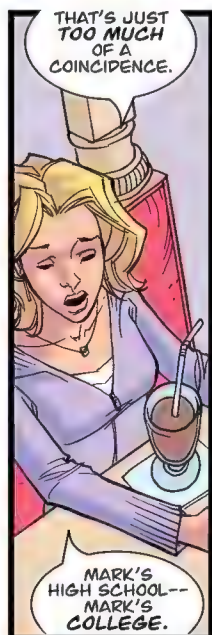
...MARK'S DAD  
WAS HIT BY  
THAT CAR.



HM--  
MUST NOT  
BE HIM THEN.  
**NEXT  
THEORY.**



NO, LISTEN... I  
THINK INVINCIBLE  
WAS THE SUPER-  
HERO WHO CAUGHT  
OUR PHYSICS  
TEACHER WHEN  
HE WAS TURNING  
OUR CLASSMATES  
INTO HUMAN  
BOMBS.

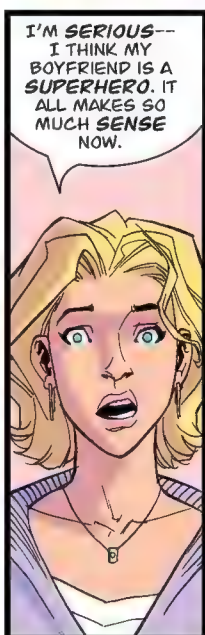


THAT'S JUST  
TOO MUCH  
OF A  
COINCIDENCE.

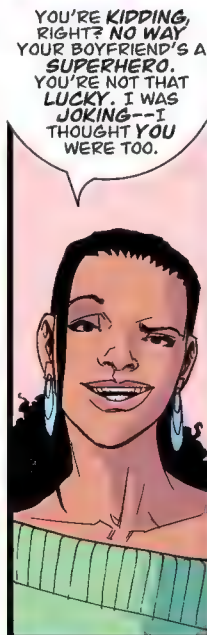
MARK'S  
HIGH SCHOOL--  
MARK'S  
COLLEGE.



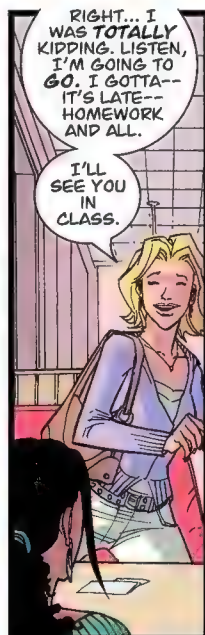
PHYSICS TEACHER,  
HUH? MY MIDDLE  
SCHOOL GYM  
TEACHER WAS THE  
KINETIC KILLER--  
HE WAS PRETTY  
SMALL TIME  
THOUGH.



I'M SERIOUS--  
I THINK MY  
BOYFRIEND IS A  
SUPERHERO. IT  
ALL MAKES SO  
MUCH SENSE  
NOW.



YOU'RE KIDDING,  
RIGHT? NO WAY  
YOUR BOYFRIEND'S A  
SUPERHERO.  
YOU'RE NOT THAT  
LUCKY. I WAS  
JOKING--I  
THOUGHT YOU  
WERE TOO.



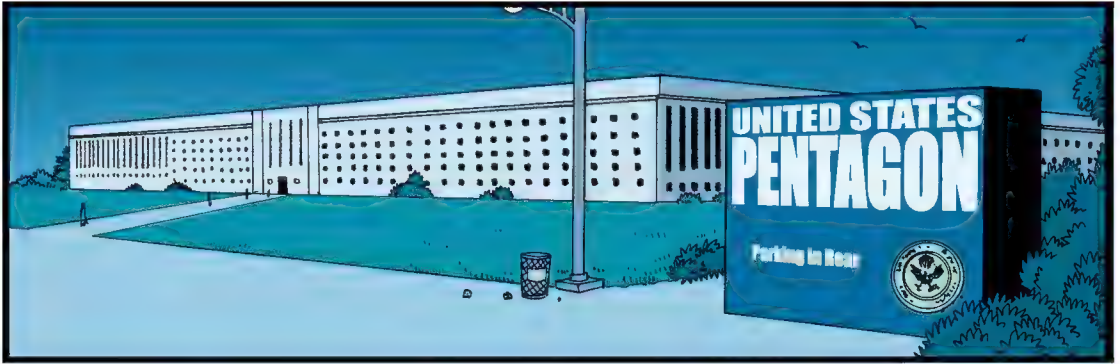
RIGHT... I  
WAS TOTALLY  
KIDDING. LISTEN,  
I'M GOING TO  
GO. I GOTTA--  
IT'S LATE--  
HOMEWORK  
AND ALL.

I'LL  
SEE YOU  
IN  
CLASS.



'KAY.  
LATER.

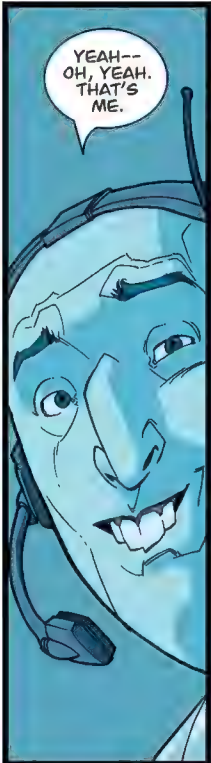




HOW  
GOES  
IT?

HOW  
GOES  
WHAT,  
SIR?

ARE YOU  
NOT THE ONE  
MONITORING  
THE MAULER  
TWIN?



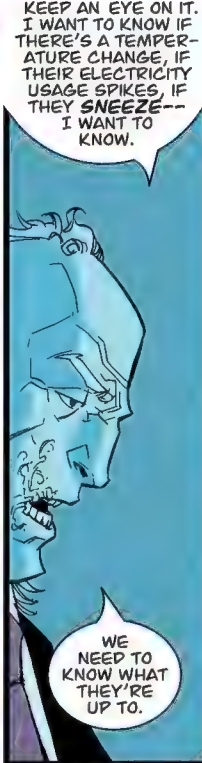
YEAH--  
OH, YEAH.  
THAT'S  
ME.



THEN--  
HOW  
GOES  
IT?



UM--NO  
CHANGE  
WHATSOEVER,  
SIR. THEY'VE  
LEFT AND COME  
BACK BUT NO  
ACTUAL ACTIVITY  
AS NEAR AS I  
CAN TELL...  
SIR.

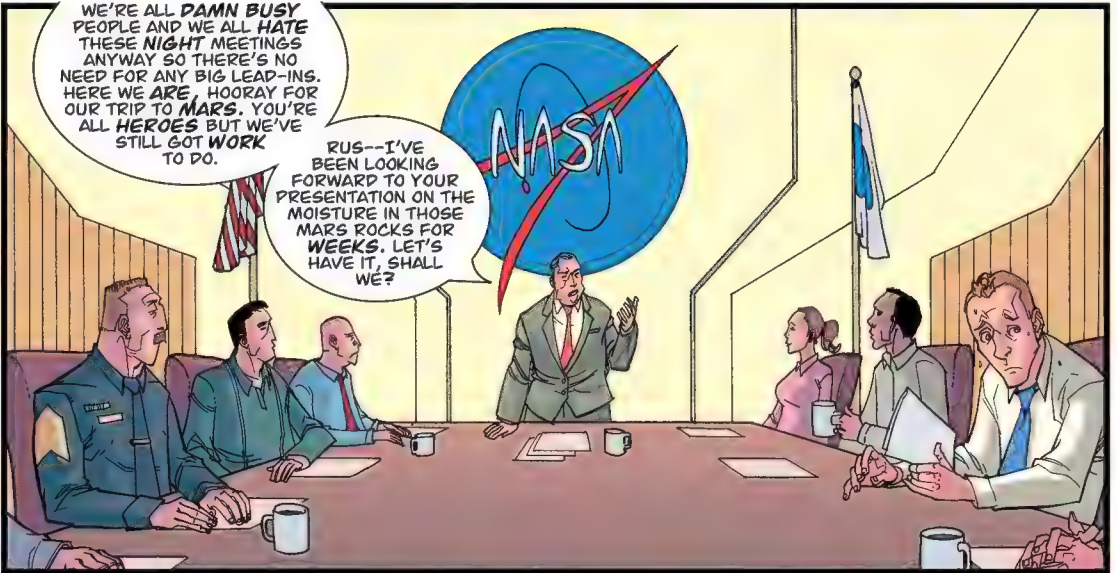
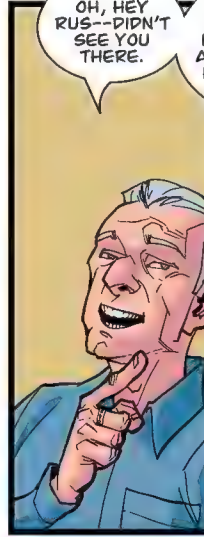


KEEP AN EYE ON IT.  
I WANT TO KNOW IF  
THERE'S A TEMPER-  
ATURE CHANGE, IF  
THEIR ELECTRICITY  
USAGE SPIKES, IF  
THEY SNEEZE--  
I WANT TO  
KNOW.

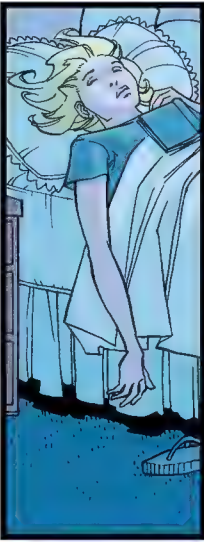
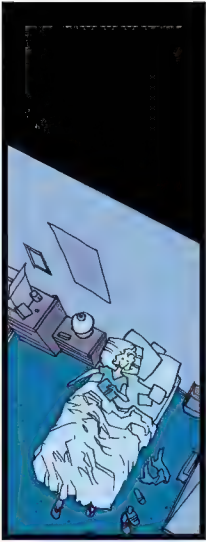
WE  
NEED TO  
KNOW WHAT  
THEY'RE  
UP TO.



YES  
SIR.







AMBER!



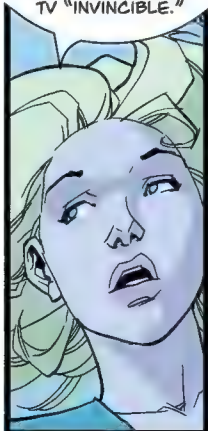
TELL ME YOU  
ARE INVINCIBLE  
RIGHT NOW OR I  
WILL CALL THE  
POLICE.



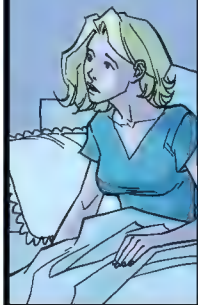
UM...

...I'M  
INVINCIBLE.

DON'T BE CUTE. I'M NOT MEANING, I-CAN'T-BE-HURT "INVINCIBLE." I MEAN I'M-THE-BLUE-AND-YELLOW-GUY-FROM-TV "INVINCIBLE."



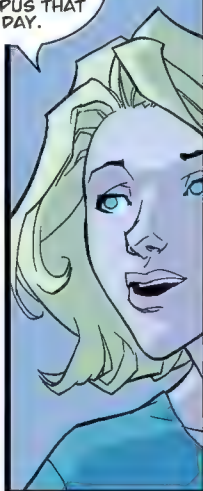
THE ONE WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.



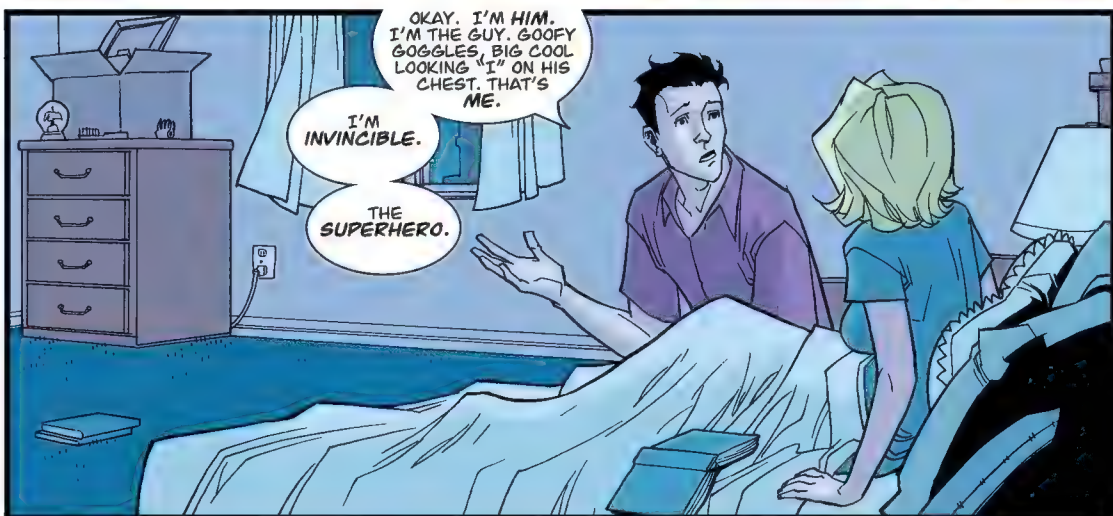
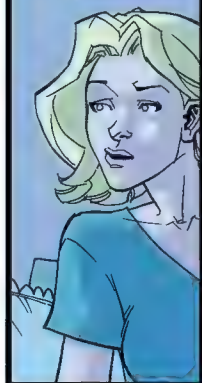
THE ONE WHOSE DAD KILLED ALL THOSE PEOPLE AND DISAPPEARED WHILE YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH.



THE ONE WHO SAVED ME ON CAMPUS THAT DAY.



WELL?



OKAY. I'M HIM. I'M THE GUY. GOOFY GOGGLES, BIG COOL LOOKING "I" ON HIS CHEST. THAT'S ME.

I'M INVINCIBLE.

THE SUPERHERO.

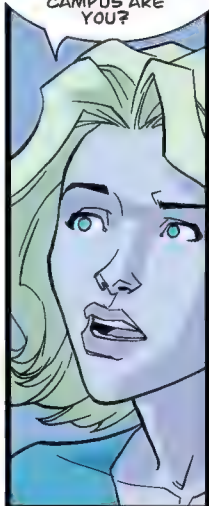
SO YOU'RE NOT A DRUG DEALER.



WHAT? NO!



YOU'RE NOT SAYING THIS TO GET OFF THE HOOK FOR ABANDONING ME ON CAMPUS ARE YOU?



NO. I'M HIM. I SWEAR. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU EARLIER TONIGHT.



PROVE IT.

OKAY, ONE SECOND.





SEE? I'M INVINCIBLE.

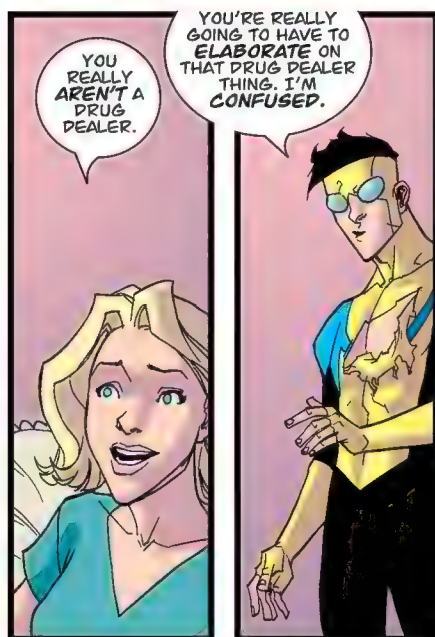
SORRY ABOUT THE RIP IN MY COSTUME. I WAS IN A FIGHT TONIGHT-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLED AWAY FOR EARLIER.

THIS IS A NEW FABRIC-- ISN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET MY MONEY BACK.

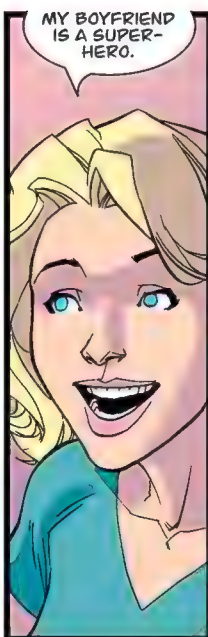


YOU REALLY AREN'T A DRUG DEALER.

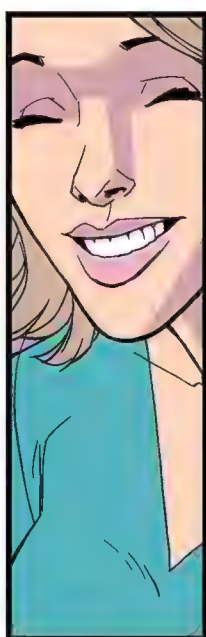
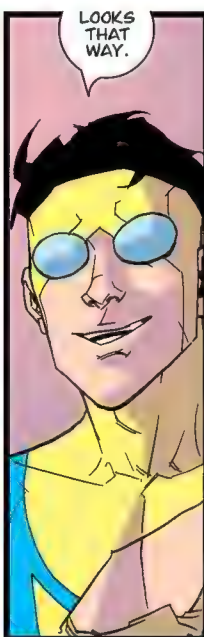
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT DRUG DEALER THING. I'M CONFUSED.

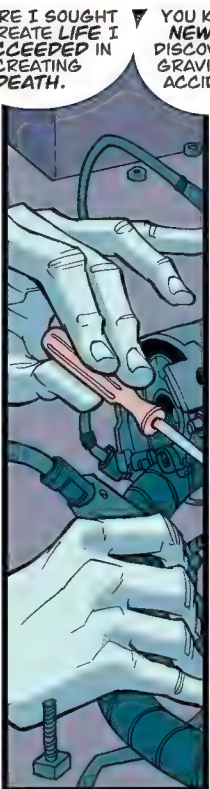


MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.



LOOKS THAT WAY.



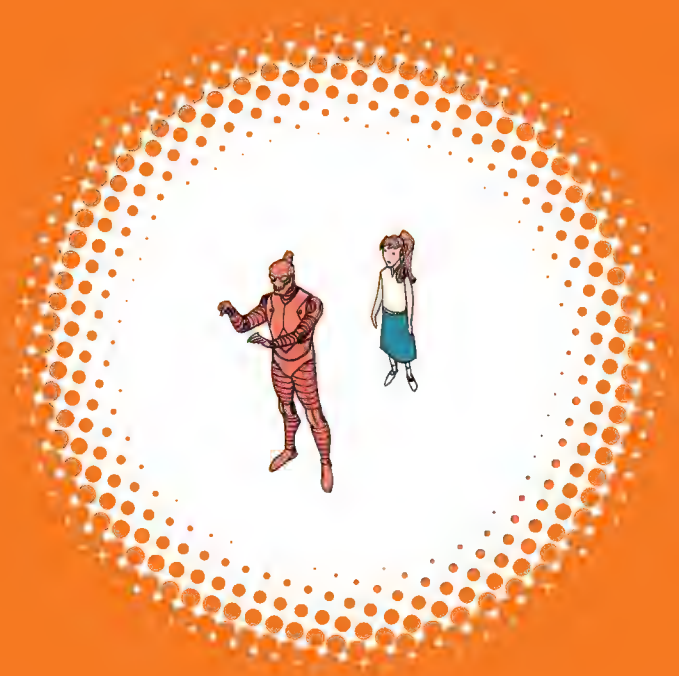






MY FIRST  
LIVE SUBJECT  
TO BE TURNED  
INTO A  
REANIMAN.

THE FIRST  
IN AN ARMY  
OF KILLING  
MACHINES.





# CHAPTER FOUR





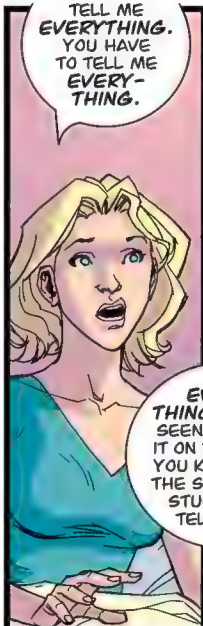


MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO. I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW UNBELIEVABLY COOL THAT IS. I'M STILL IN SHOCK.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO FINALLY GET THAT OFF MY CHEST. I'M SO HAPPY YOU'RE TAKING THIS SO WELL.

I'VE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS.

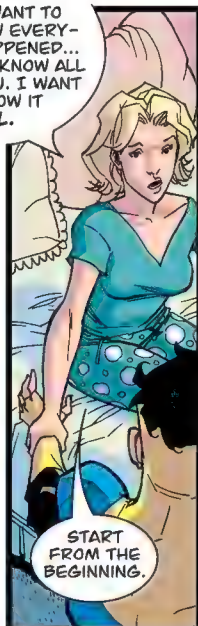


TELL ME EVERYTHING. YOU HAVE TO TELL ME EVERYTHING.

EVERYTHING? YOU'VE SEEN MOST OF IT ON THE NEWS. YOU KNOW ME-- THE SUPERHERO STUFF IS ALL TELEVISED.



NO-- I WANT TO KNOW HOW EVERYTHING HAPPENED... I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. I WANT TO KNOW IT ALL.



START FROM THE BEGINNING.



THE BEGINNING? IT'S KIND OF LATE ALREADY. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY TONIGHT?

MARK, LISTEN TO ME. MY BOYFRIEND, YOU, JUST REVEALED TO ME HE'S A SUPERHERO. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DANGER OF ME SLEEPING AT ALL TONIGHT. LET ALONE ANY TIME SOON.

TELL ME.

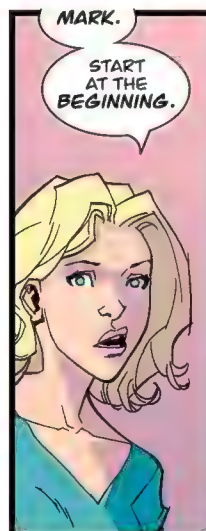
RIGHT NOW.

THE WHOLE STORY.



OKAY-- UNDERSTOOD. WILL DO.

JUST LET ME FIGURE OUT WHERE TO START.



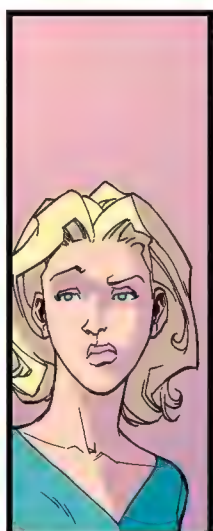
MARK.

START AT THE BEGINNING.

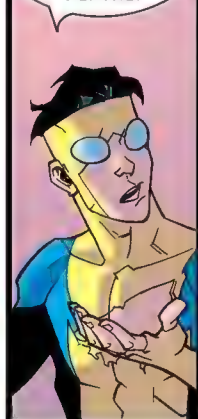


OKAY--LET ME REPHRASE.

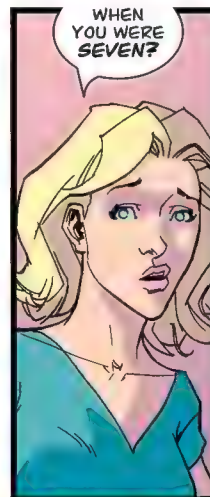
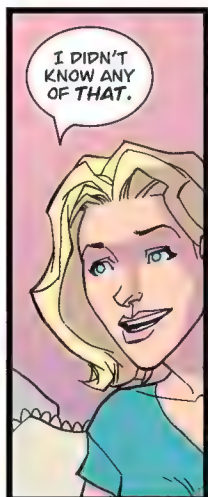
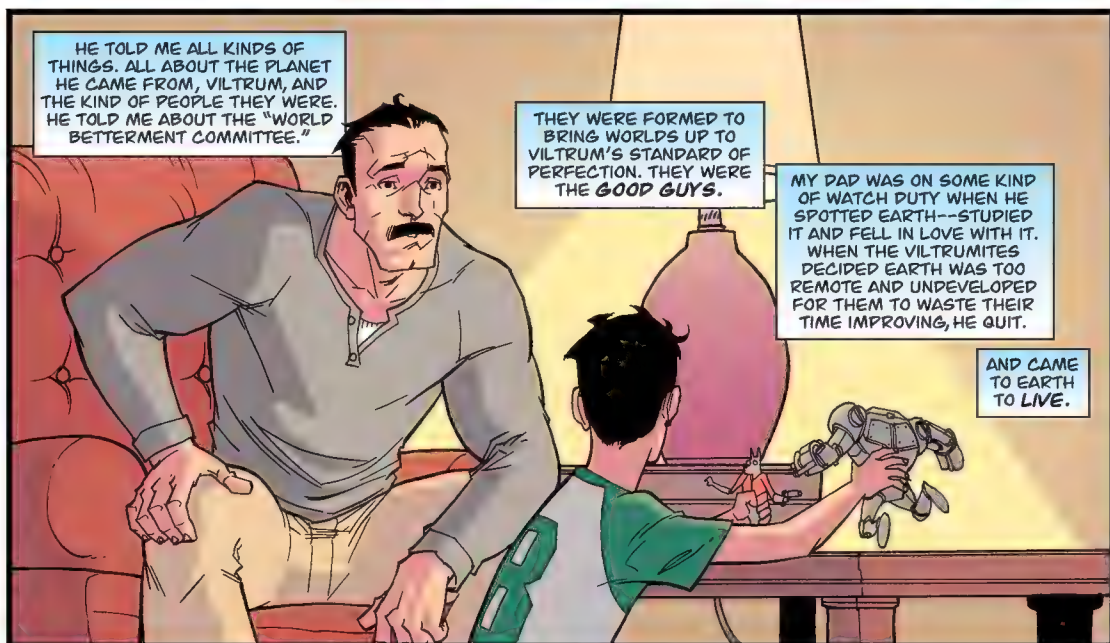
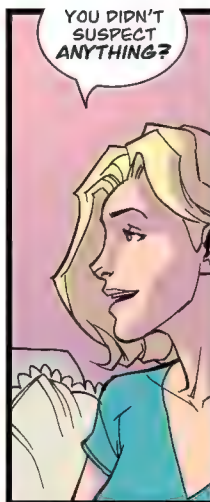
I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE BEGINNING IS.



CUT ME SOME SLACK, OKAY? I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAT DOWN AND TOLD THIS STORY BEFORE.









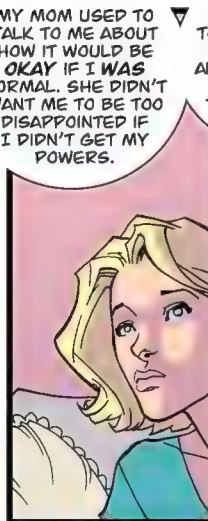
DID THEY?  
THE POWERS  
I MEAN. DID  
THEY KICK IN  
WHEN YOU  
WERE FOUR-  
TEEN?



NO--NOT UNTIL I WAS  
**SEVENTEEN**. IT WAS  
BARELY A YEAR AGO  
ACTUALLY. I, UM... I  
GUESS I'M A LATE  
BLOOMER.



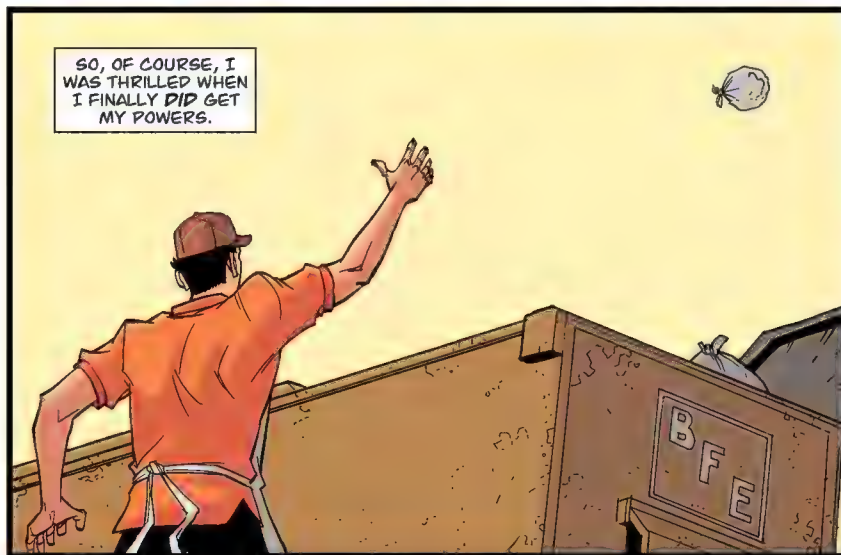
THAT'S THE THING,  
SEE... I GREW UP  
**EXPECTING** MY  
POWERS. EVERY  
DAY I WOKE UP  
AND **COULDN'T**  
FLY WAS A  
DISAPPOINT-  
MENT.



MY MOM USED TO  
TALK TO ME ABOUT  
HOW IT WOULD BE  
**OKAY** IF I WAS  
NORMAL. SHE DIDN'T  
WANT ME TO BE TOO  
DISAPPOINTED IF  
I DIDN'T GET MY  
POWERS.



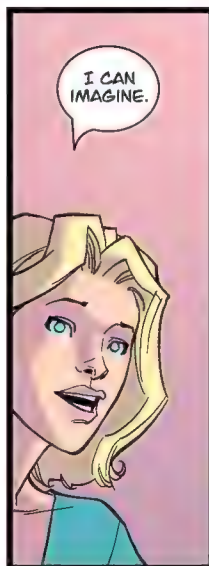
LIKE I SAID--IT  
TOOK **FOREVER**...  
I MEAN, I HAD  
ALMOST GIVEN UP,  
AND STOPPED  
THINKING ABOUT  
IT.



SO, OF COURSE, I  
WAS THRILLED WHEN  
I FINALLY **DID** GET  
MY POWERS.



IT'S  
ABOUT  
TIME.



I CAN  
IMAGINE.



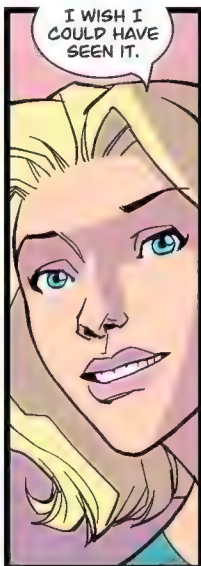
THE WEEKS THAT  
FOLLOWED ARE A  
**BLUR**. TESTING MY  
STRENGTH, TRYING TO  
FLY, LEARNING TO DO  
THINGS REALLY  
FAST...IT WAS A  
LOT OF FUN.



I TELL YOU, SCHOOL  
CERTAINLY TOOK A  
BACK SEAT THOSE  
FIRST COUPLE WEEKS.  
IT WAS ALMOST  
IMPOSSIBLE TO JUST  
SIT IN A DESK KNOWING  
I COULD DO ALL  
THAT OTHER  
STUFF.



I EVEN PUT TOGETHER  
A LITTLE COSTUME, TO  
MASK MY IDENTITY  
WHILE I PRACTICED  
FLYING. RUBBER  
GLOVES, A BANDANA--  
SWEATPANTS. IT WAS  
RIDICULOUS.



I WISH I  
COULD HAVE  
SEEN IT.



I CAN SHOW IT TO YOU. I STILL HAVE IT AT HOME... EXCEPT THE GLOVES. MY MOM USED THOSE ON DISHES...



ANYWAY--MY DAD SAW ME IN THAT GETUP **ONCE** AND TOOK ME TO GET MY FIRST COSTUME.

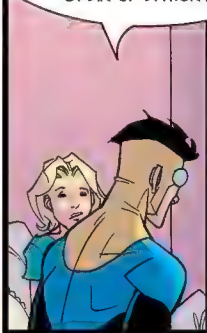


WHERE DO YOU GO FOR THAT?

MY DAD KNEW A GUY--A TAILOR-- SUPER SECRET STUFF. HE STILL MAKES ALL MY COSTUMES. HE'S A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.



ONCE I HAD THE COSTUME, I DOVE HEAD FIRST INTO MY LIFE AS A SUPERHERO. I FOUGHT SOME GUYS--MET SOME OTHER HEROES--ALL IN THE SPAN OF A MONTH.



AFTER A WHILE--I EVEN GOT TO GO ON A FEW MISSIONS WITH MY DAD.



SEEING HIM IN ACTION WAS--I WAS IN AWE. I'D SEEN HIM ON THE NEWS MILLIONS OF TIMES WHILE GROWING UP. YOU'D THINK I WOULD BE USED TO IT.

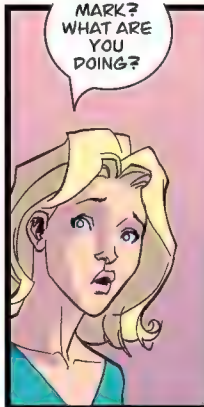
BEING THERE, SEEING HIM IN PERSON--WATCHING HIM UP CLOSE--IT WAS MESMERIZING. HE WAS MOVING SO FAST HE WOULD JUST SEEM TO **APPEAR** WHERE HE WAS NEEDED.



HE WAS A FIGHTING MACHINE--I DIDN'T SEE HIM HESITATE FOR EVEN A SECOND. HE TRULY WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.

I COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH HIM WHEN WE FLEW TOGETHER.

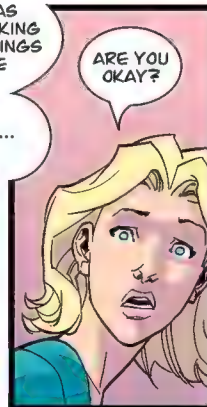
MARK? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST--I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE. BEFORE HE--



ARE YOU OKAY?



YEAH, OF COURSE. SORRY I--WHERE WAS I?





YOU HAD JUST BECOME A SUPER-HERO.

OH, YEAH. AROUND THAT SAME TIME, STUDENTS AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'LL REMEMBER, WERE TURNING UP ALL OVER TOWN, WITH BOMBS INSIDE THEM-- BLOWING STUFF UP.

I REMEMBER. TWIN PINES MALL WAS CLOSED FOR LIKE--FOUR MONTHS. IT WAS HORRIBLE.

THE WHOLE THING--NOT JUST THE MALL BEING CLOSED--OF COURSE.

OF COURSE. ANYWAY-- I FIRST DISCOVERED THEY WERE STUDENTS FROM OUR SCHOOL BECAUSE MY DAD AND I ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THEM IN LAKESIDE MALL.

THE GUY MUST HAVE HATED MALLS. ANYWAY, WE GOT TO HIM JUST BEFORE HE WENT OFF--

I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM SCHOOL. DAD THREW HIM INTO THE SKY AND SAVED THE MALL.

YOU WERE ON TV, THEN. THAT WAS WHEN YOU CALLED OMNI-MAN "DAD" AND EVERYONE FOUND OUT YOU WERE HIS SON.

YEAH--THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK LATER THAT ATOM EVE AND I ACTUALLY STOPPED THE GUY BEHIND IT ALL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MR. HILES, OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.

HE WAS A REAL NUT JOB AND HAD SOMEHOW EVEN TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB. HE WAS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF US IN HIS FINAL ACT BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA SO THE EXPLOSION WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY.

EVE HELPED ME OUT A LOT IN THOSE DAYS ACTUALLY. SHE WAS KINDA LIKE MY SUPERHERO PARTNER.

ATOM EVE? SHE'S NOT--I MEAN--THAT'S NOT OUR EVE IS IT?

YEAH--IT KINDA IS. JEEZ, DON'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. SHE'D BE REALLY PISSED IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOLD YOU.

YOU CAN TRUST ME, MARK. I PROMISE. IF NOTHING ELSE COMES OF THIS TALK--I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AT LEAST KNOW THAT.

I TRUST YOU, AMBER. I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU GOTTA SAY, Y'KNOW.

SO YEAH, HILES WAS MY FIRST BIG SUPERVILLAIN. IF YOU CAN EVEN CALL HIM THAT.



I FACED A FEW GOOD ONES: THE MAULER TWINS, TITAN, DOC SEISMIC, THE LIZARD LEAGUE, AND THIS ONE DUDE CALLED "THE ELEPHANT" BUT HE WAS REALLY JUST A LAME RIP-OFF OF "THE RHINO."

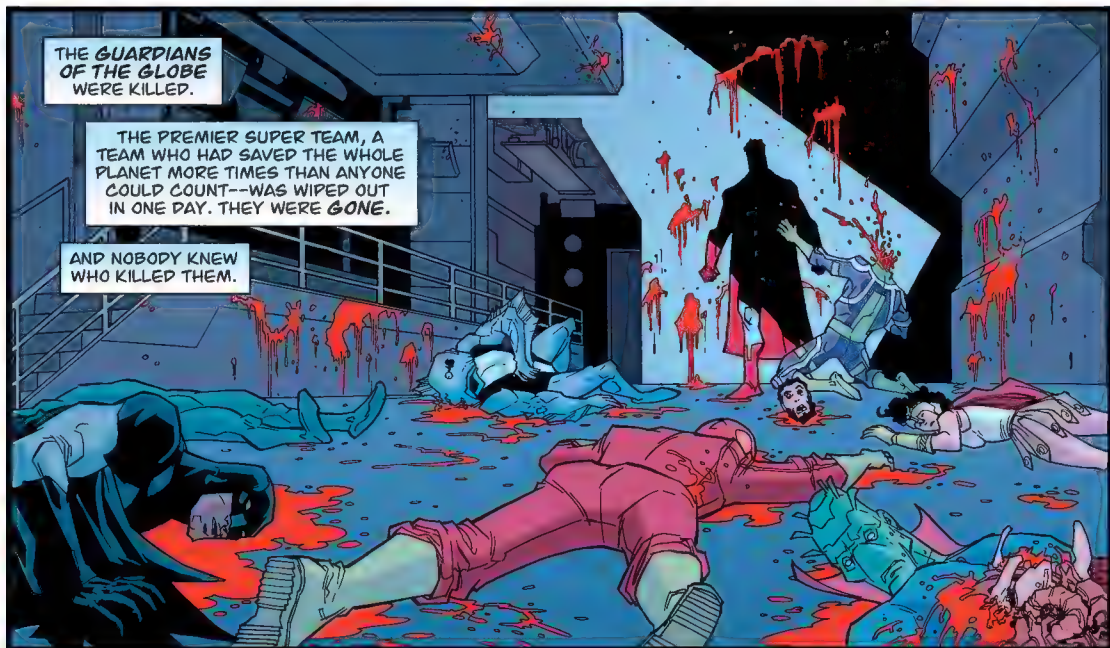
THAT GUY KINDA SUCKED.

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY OF THOSE GUYS.

YEAH, WELL--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT IN "THE BUSINESS." OTHERWISE YOU'D TOTALLY KNOW WHO THEY WERE.

NO. I WATCH THE NEWS. THERE'S A NEW SUPERVILLAIN ON THERE EVERY WEEK. THE CHRONOPILE, MEGA-BRAIN, SEBASTIAN KAHN... I SEE VILLAINS ON TV-- BUT NONE OF THE GUYS YOU MENTIONED.

YEAH--UH--ANYWAY, THINGS WENT ALONG PRETTY SMOOTHLY FOR A LONG TIME. THEN--SHORTLY BEFORE YOU AND I GOT TOGETHER EVERYTHING CHANGED.



NOBODY BUT YOU...

RIGHT?

NO! I HAD NO IDEA WHO HAD DONE IT.

I DON'T KNOW... A MONTH.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

OH--HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT?





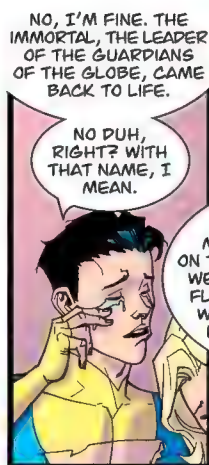
I DON'T--I'VE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE... EVER.



I--

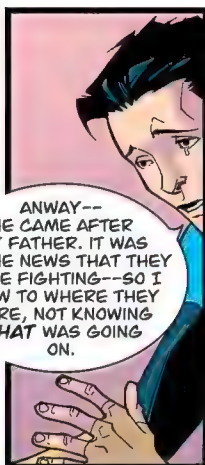


OH, MARK--I'M SO SORRY. YOU CAN STOP IF YOU WANT.

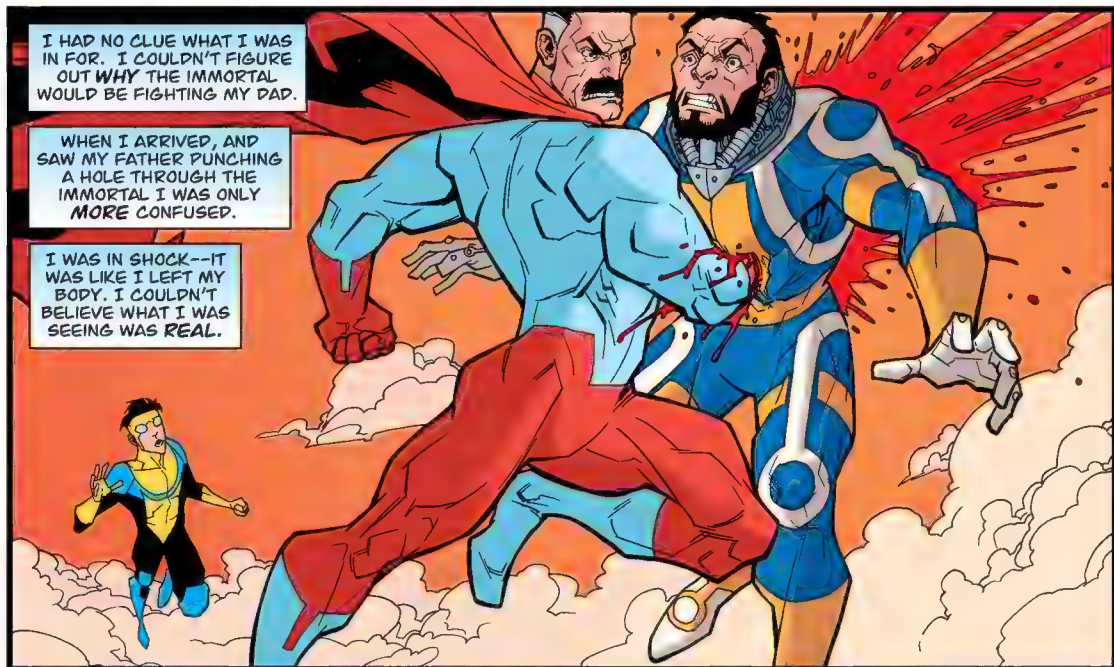


NO, I'M FINE. THE IMMORTAL, THE LEADER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, CAME BACK TO LIFE.

NO DUH, RIGHT? WITH THAT NAME, I MEAN.



ANYWAY-- HE CAME AFTER MY FATHER. IT WAS ON THE NEWS THAT THEY WERE FIGHTING--SO I FLEW TO WHERE THEY WERE, NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON.



I HAD NO CLUE WHAT I WAS IN FOR. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHY THE IMMORTAL WOULD BE FIGHTING MY DAD.

WHEN I ARRIVED, AND SAW MY FATHER PUNCHING A HOLE THROUGH THE IMMORTAL I WAS ONLY MORE CONFUSED.

I WAS IN SHOCK--IT WAS LIKE I LEFT MY BODY. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS SEEING WAS REAL.



HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS THERE YET--I HEARD THEM TALKING WHILE THEY FOUGHT.

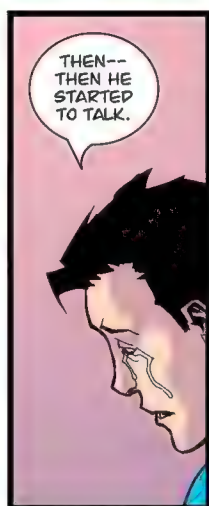
THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MY FATHER--MY FATHER KILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



WHEN HE SAW THAT I WAS THERE-- HE JUST LOOKED AT ME, LIKE HE WAS AS SHOCKED AS I WAS.



IT SEEMED LIKE HE STARED AT ME FOREVER.

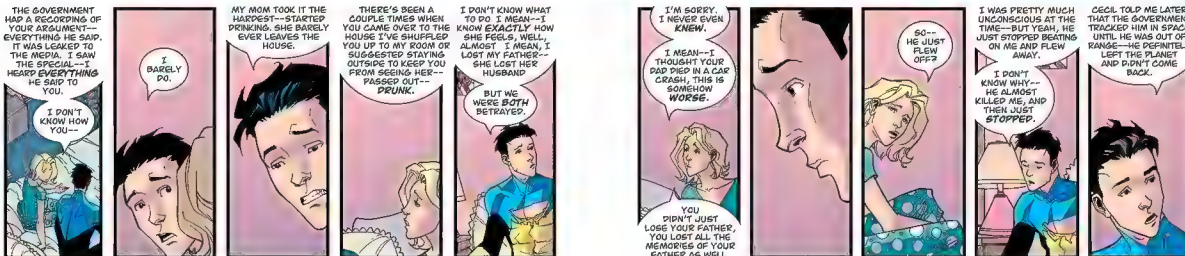
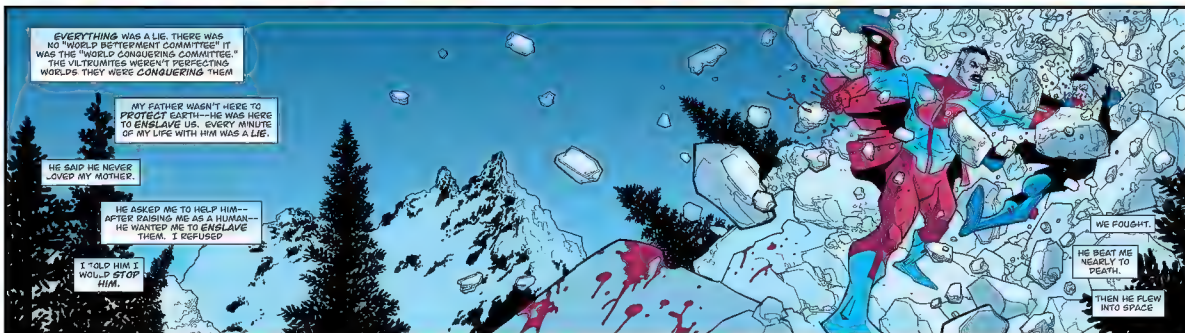
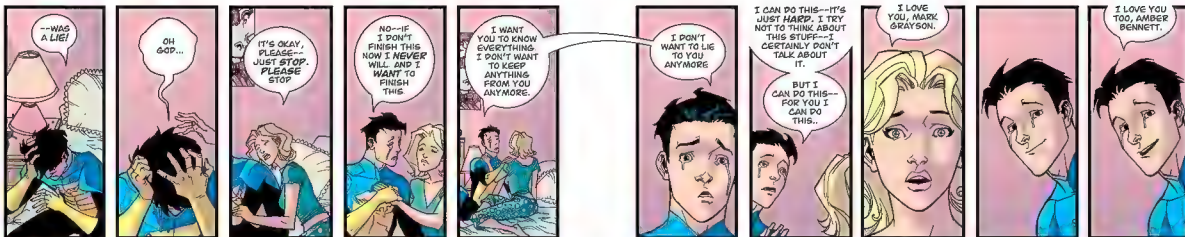


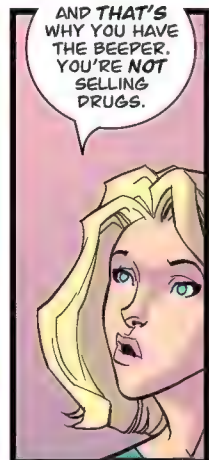
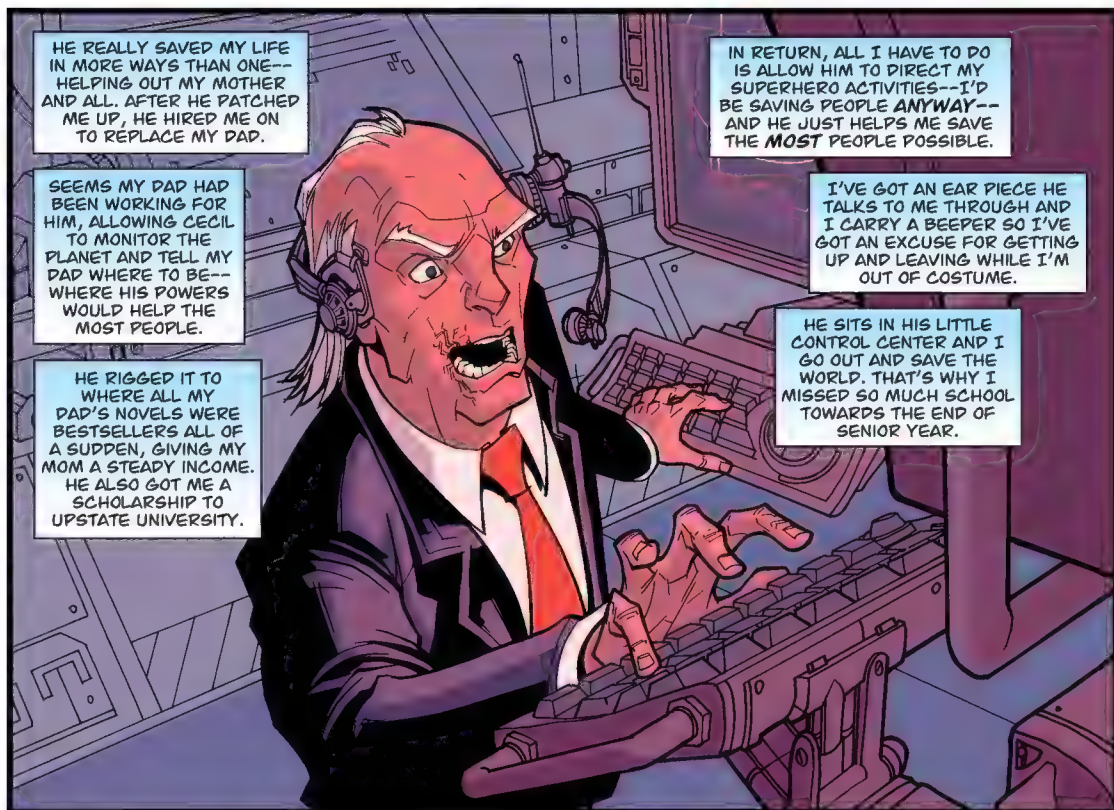
THEN-- THEN HE STARTED TO TALK.



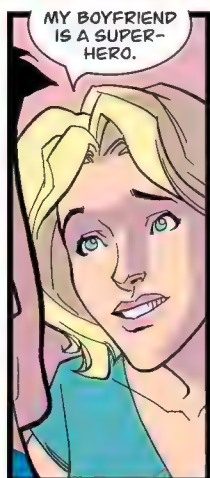
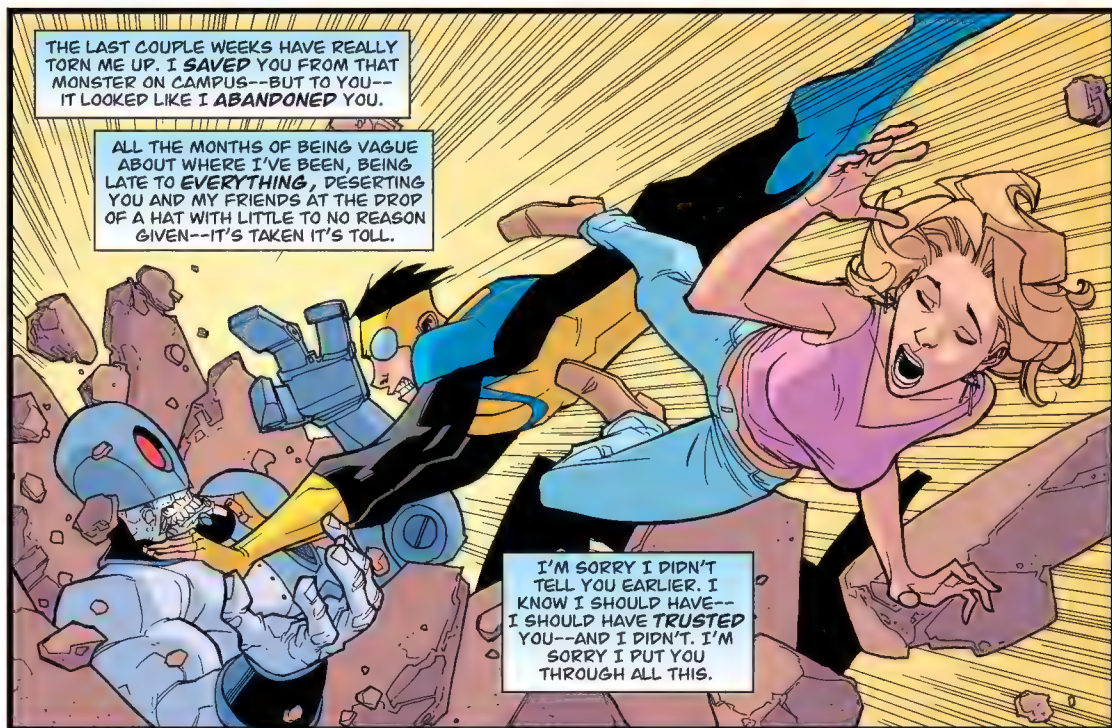
HE TOLD ME--HE TOLD ME THAT EVERYTHING HE HAD EVER TOLD ME ABOUT HIMSELF--



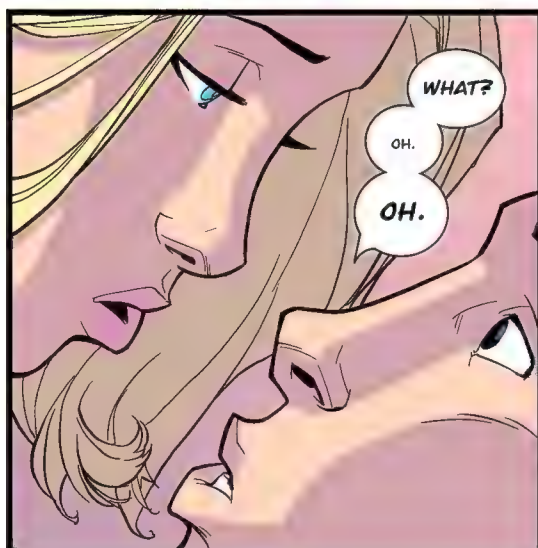
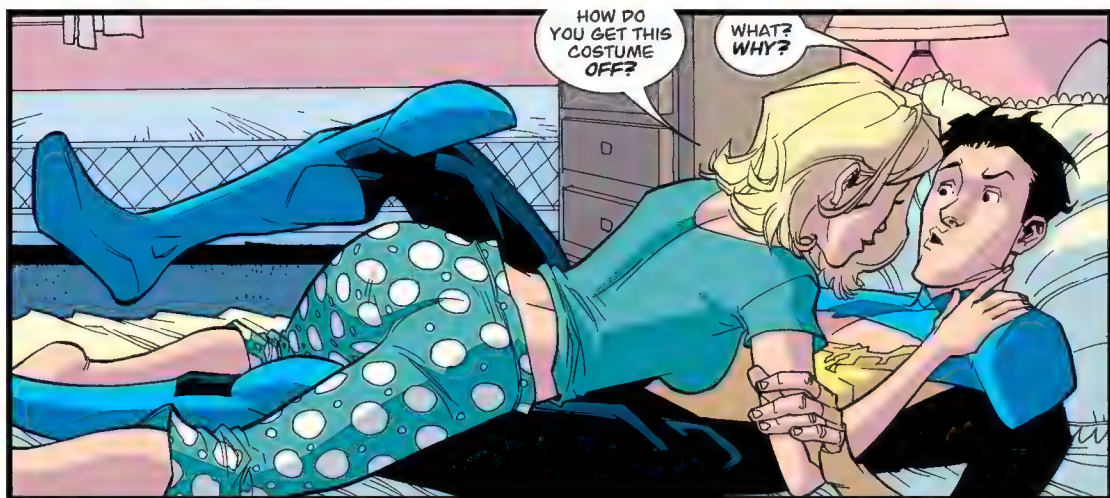
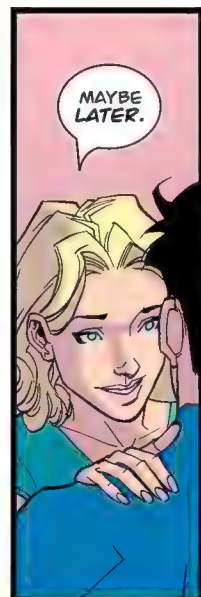
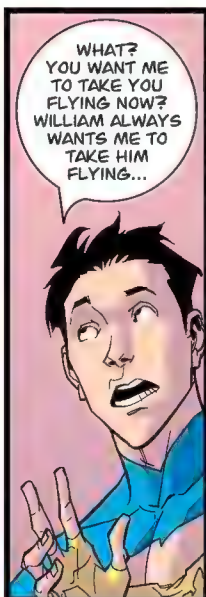
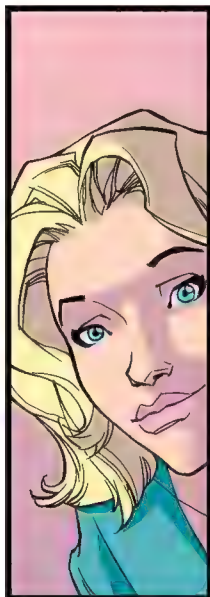
















# CHAPTER FIVE

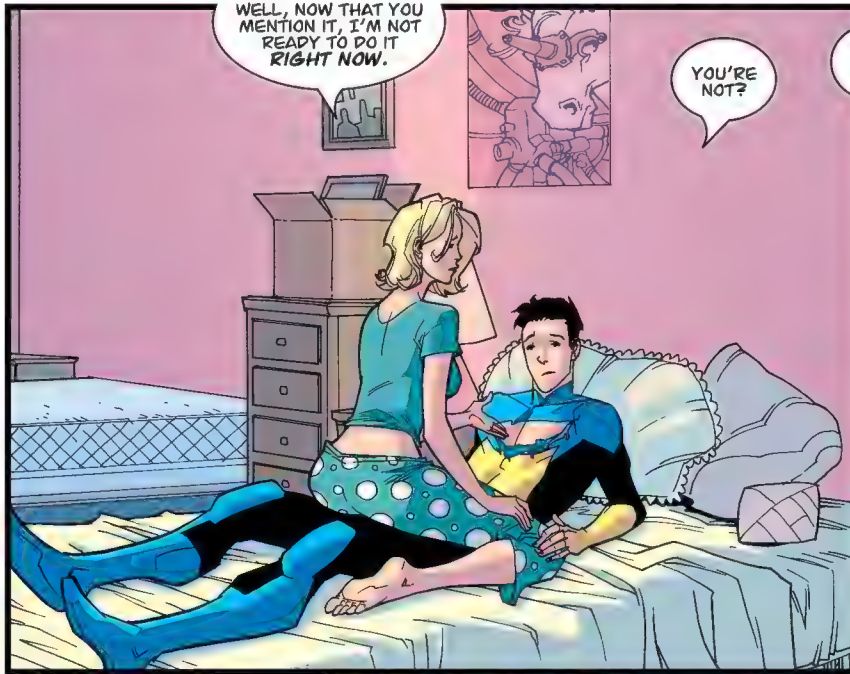






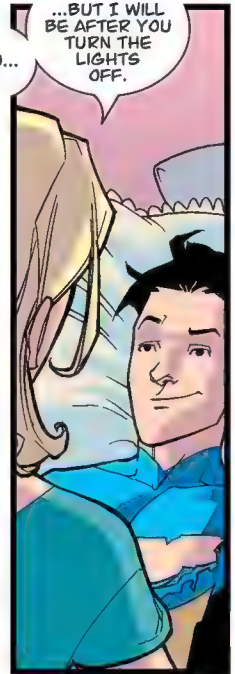
YOU'RE READY FOR THIS? I MEAN-- REALLY READY? I DON'T WANT TO RUSH YOU INTO ANYTHING.

I ONLY WANT TO DO THIS IF YOU WANT TO. DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS RIGHT NOW?



WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I'M NOT READY TO DO IT RIGHT NOW.

YOU'RE NOT?



NO...

...BUT I WILL BE AFTER YOU TURN THE LIGHTS OFF.

**KLUICK.**

HOW'D YOU DO THAT?

SUPER-POWERS, BABY.

BORN OF A RACE ENDANGERED, CAST OUT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD LIKE A BAND OF GYPSIES, TESTED AND EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED, UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS. IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: ALLEN THE ALIEN IN:

# THIS MISSIVE, THIS MACHINATION!

AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTIONS ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND AMBER BENNETT SOME PRIVACY.

THIS IS A FAMILY TITLE AFTER ALL.

YES, WE TURN TO EVENTS TRANSPIRING ELSEWHERE, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, **DEEP SPACE**. TO BE STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BE EVEN **STILL** MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO, ON A DIRECT PATH FROM EARTH TO THE HEART OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS!

ON THIS PATH WE FIND **ALLEN THE ALIEN**, DILIGENT IN HIS MISSION TO DELIVER NEWS TO HIS SUPERIORS. DILIGENT IN BRINGING THEM THE MESSAGE OF HIS DEALINGS ON EARTH!

A MESSAGE THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THERE IS A **VILTRUMITE** ON EARTH WITH NO LOYALTIES TO THE **VILTRUM EMPIRE**. BEYOND THAT THERE IS ANOTHER **VILTRUMITE** WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS POST.\*

THESE ACTIONS ARE **UNHEARD OF**--AND NEWS OF THIS MAY WELL BRING THE COALITION THE HOPE IT NEEDS IN THESE DIRE TIMES.

\*SEE ISSUE 13, TRUE BELIEVERS.

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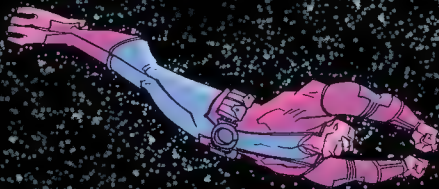
ERIK LARSEN  
PUBLISHER

INVINCIBLE Vol 1, No 23, MAY, 2005 (U.S.P.S. 426-730) Published by IMAGE COMICS Todd McFarlane, President. Erik Larsen, Publisher. Marc Silvestri, CEO. Jim Valentino, Vice-President. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1942 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 305, BERKELEY, CA 94704. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 2005 by ROBERT KIRKMAN & CORY WALKER. All rights reserved. Price \$2.95 per copy in the U.S. and \$3.65 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. \$12.00; Canada \$17.00; and foreign \$24.00. Printed in Canada. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that is shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. INVINCIBLE (including all prominent characters featured in the issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) and of ROBERT KIRKMAN & CORY WALKER. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO INVINCIBLE, c/o IMAGE COMICS, 1942 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 305, BERKELEY, CA 94704.



AS ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY HOME CONTINUES HIS MIND DRIFTS, THINKING BACK ON THE HUMBLE ORIGINS OF HIS PEOPLE... AND HIMSELF.

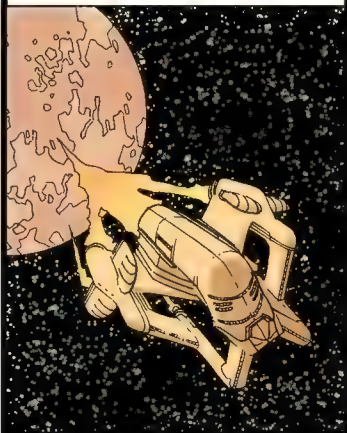
A TALE THAT WOULD RIVAL DEEP SPACE ITSELF IN COLD AND HARSHNESS.



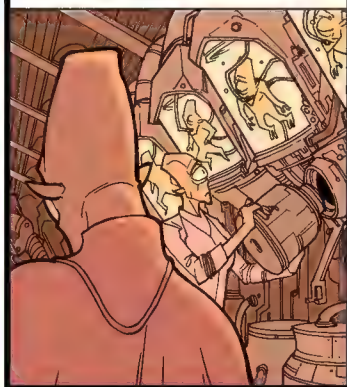
LIFE ON UNOPA WAS ENDED WHEN THE VILTRUMITES INVADED. LIKE A PLAGUE OF UNEQUALLED POTENCY, THE VILTRUMITES SWEEP ACROSS THE PLANET--CONQUERING IT IN A MATTER OF DAYS.



EVER RESOURCEFUL--THE UNOPANS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE THEIR PLANET, ABANDONING IT FOR THE STARS--AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFE.



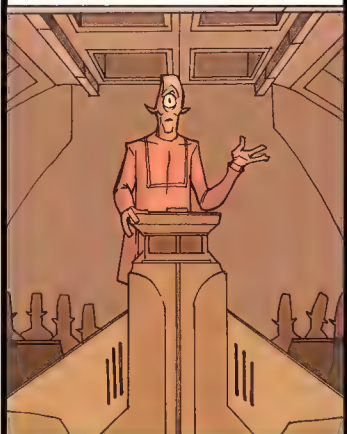
TO ENSURE THEIR RACE'S SURVIVAL, BREEDING CAMPS WERE FORMED ON VARIOUS OUTPOSTS. OFFSPRING WERE PRODUCED IN A FACTORY ENVIRONMENT, RESULTING IN A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN UNOPAN SOCIETY.



IMPRESSED WITH THE UNOPANS ABILITY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS OF THE VILTRUMITE INVASION--THE COALITION OF PLANETS INVITED THEM TO JOIN THEIR RANKS.



ONCE THE UNOPANS HAD BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE COALITION OF PLANETS A PLAN WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL OF ELDERS.



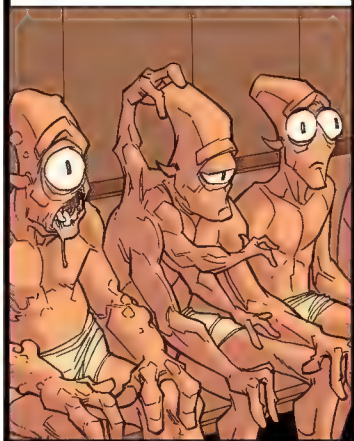
THE UNOPAN LEADER HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF GENETIC ENHANCEMENT THAT MIGHT ENGINEER A NEW BREED OF UNOPAN, STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND A VILTRUMITE INVASION.

DESPERATE TO FIND A WAY TO COMBAT THE EVER-EXPANDING VILTRUM EMPIRE, THE PLAN WAS APPROVED IMMEDIATELY.





FOR YEARS THE UNOPAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED ON UNBORN FETUSES. THE RESULTS WERE A COMPLETE FAILURE.



UNTIL ALLEN. HE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY SUBJECT TO SURVIVE THE TESTS WITHOUT DISFIGUREMENT AND MENTAL HANDICAPS.



HE WAS THE ONLY SUCCESS.

NEARLY FROM THE DAY HE WAS BORN HE WAS TAUGHT TO BE THE GREATEST FIGHTER THE UNIVERSE HAD EVER SEEN.



FOR A TIME--IT SEEMED HE WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. EVEN BEFORE ADULTHOOD AN OPPONENT COULD NOT BE FOUND WHO DIDN'T FALL BEFORE HIS MIGHT.



IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADULTHOOD HAD BEEN REACHED HE WAS SENT ON HIS FIRST MISSION AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES.



IT DID NOT GO WELL. IT TURNED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ALLEN WAS STRONGER THAN MOST EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WAS NOT UP TO VILTRUMITE STANDARDS OF COMBAT.



WITH ALLEN DEFEATED, THE PROGRAM WAS ONCE AGAIN CONSIDERED A FAILURE, AND WAS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.



THE PROGRAM WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS, ALLEN WAS SENT OUT INTO THE COSMOS UNDER THE GUISE OF "CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER."



HIS REAL MISSION WAS TO SEARCH FOR BEINGS STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT HIM AND REPORT THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE COALITION.

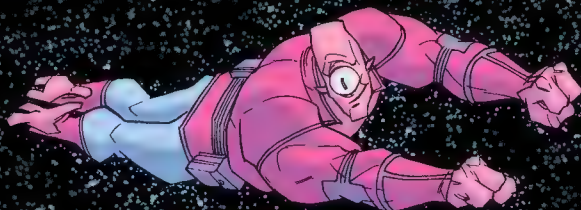
THE HOPE WAS THAT IF THEY COULD DEFEAT HIM--MAYBE THEY WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT A VILTRUMITE AS WELL.





OF COURSE, DEAR READER,  
THE STORY DOES NOT, IN  
FACT, END THERE

NOT EVEN  
CLOSE.



IF I WERE TO CONTINUE I WOULD  
TELL YOU OF THE TIMES NOLAN  
GRAYSON HAD DEFEATED ALLEN  
ON HIS ILL-FATED MISTAKEN  
ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PLANET  
EARTH.\*

HOW DUE TO ALLEN'S  
REPORTS, THE COALITION  
HAD SCHEDULED HIM  
MORE FREQUENT VISITS  
TO THE PLANET URATH.

\*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2, AND AGAIN IN II.



I WOULD EVEN CONTINUE TO  
TELL YOU ABOUT HOW DURING  
A CONFRONTATION WITH MARK  
GRAYSON, NOLAN'S SON, ALLEN  
LEARNED THE PLANET HE WAS  
REALLY VISITING WAS  
EARTH--NOT URATH.\*\*

THEN I WOULD TELL HOW THE  
COALITION, AFTER LEARNING OF  
THE MISTAKE, INFORMED HIM  
IT WAS OFF LIMITS--THAT  
EARTH WAS ALREADY CLAIMED  
BY VILTRUM.

I WOULD CONTINUE TO TELL  
YOU HOW ALLEN RETURNED  
TO EARTH TO WARN MARK OF  
THE VILTRUMITE IN THEIR  
MIDST.\*\*

\*\*SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIBLEHEADS.

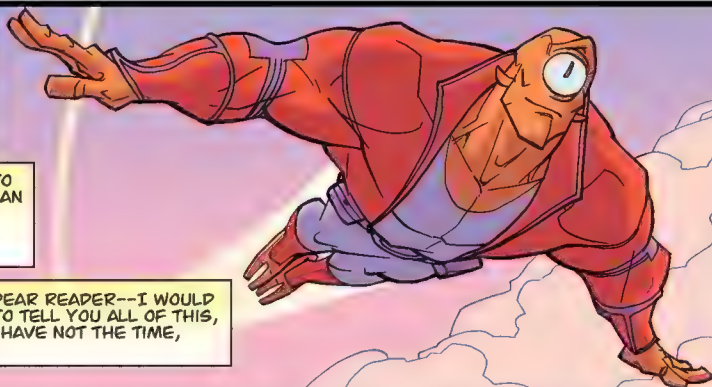
\*\*\*YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHECK OUT ISSUE 13 WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.

WERE I TO CONTINUE WITH  
THIS STORY EVEN FURTHER  
I WOULD INFORM YOU OF  
HOW ALLEN'S WARNING CAME  
TOO LATE. MARK'S FATHER  
WAS ALREADY REVEALED  
TO BE THAT VILTRUMITE.\*\*\*

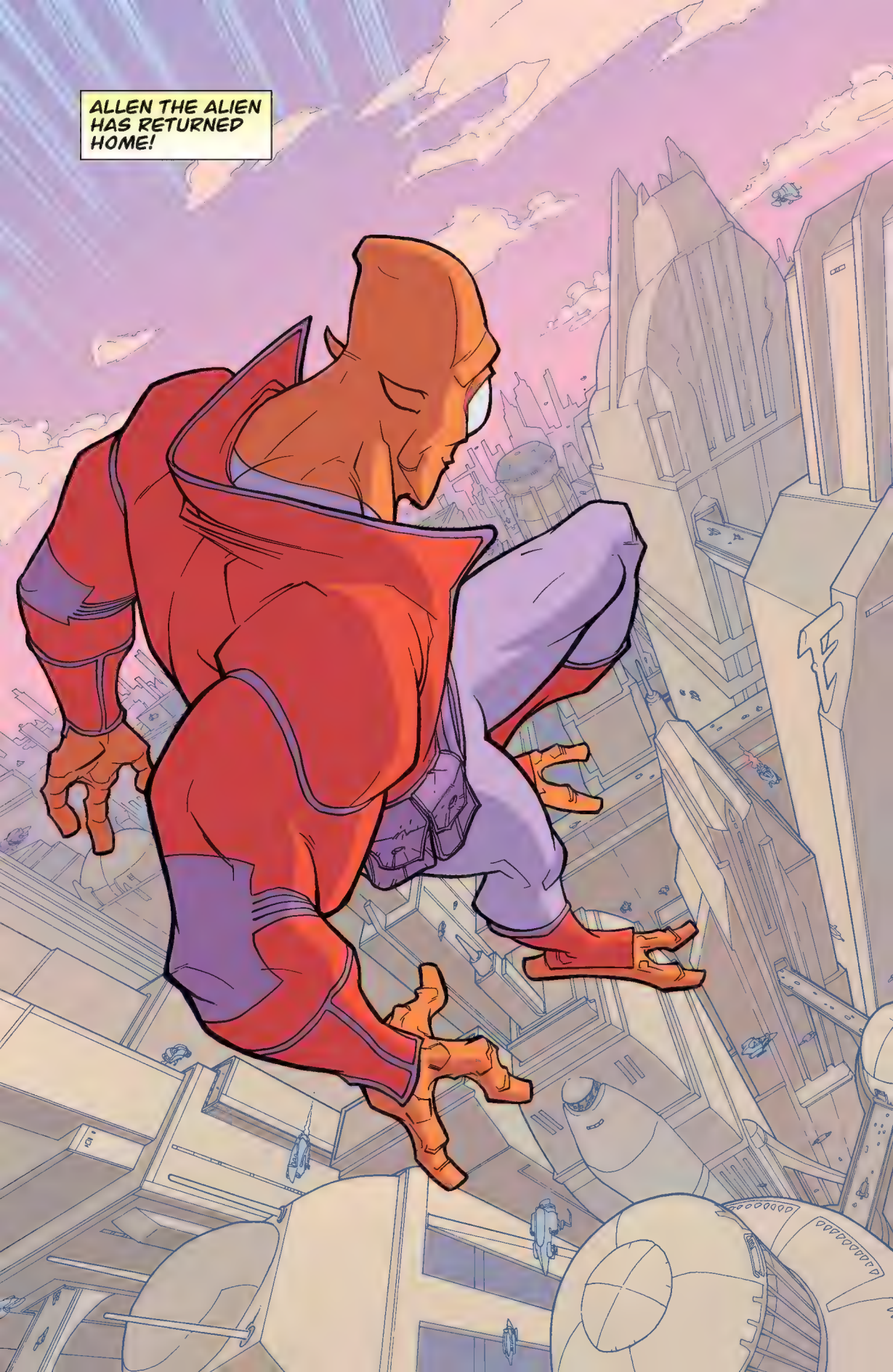
ALL THIS INFORMATION LED TO  
ALLEN'S CURRENT MISSIVE, AN  
IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE  
GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE  
COALITION LEADERS.

YES, DEAR READER--I WOULD  
LOVE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THIS,  
BUT I HAVE NOT THE TIME,  
FOR--

\*\*\*\*ALSO IN ISSUE 13.



**ALLEN THE ALIEN  
HAS RETURNED  
HOME!**





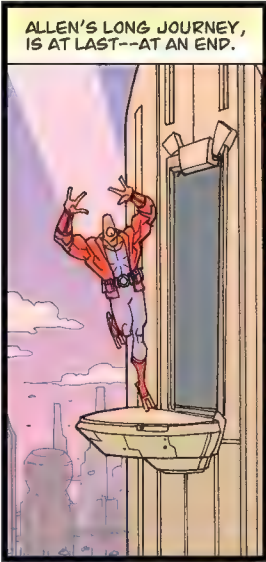


YES, **HOME**, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PLANET **TALESCRIA**, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

FAR BELOW ALLEN, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, UNAWARE OF HIS RETURN.

UNAWARE OF THE NEWS HE CARRIES WITH HIM.

UNAWARE OF THE HOPE IT MAY BRING THEM.



ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY, IS AT LAST--AT AN END.



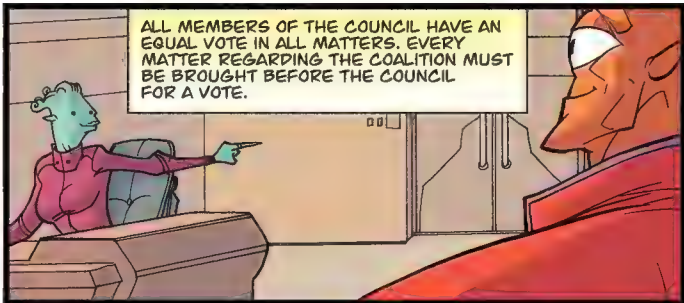
FROM THIS HUMBLE BUILDING AMIDST THE MILLION SKYSCRAPERS OF TALESCRIA, THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS DECIDED.



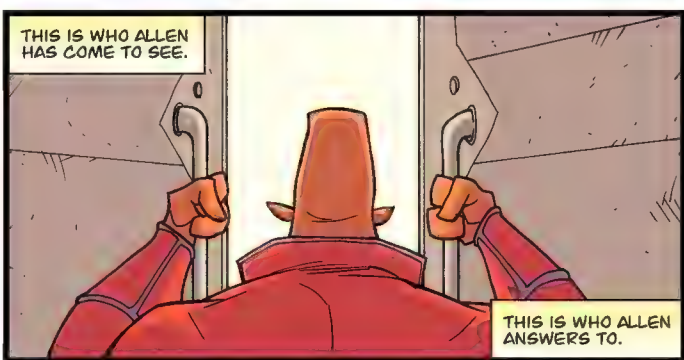
THIS BUILDING HOUSES THE MEETING HALL OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ALL DECISIONS ON ALL MATTERS ARE DECIDED HERE.



THE HIGH COUNCIL CONSISTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION.

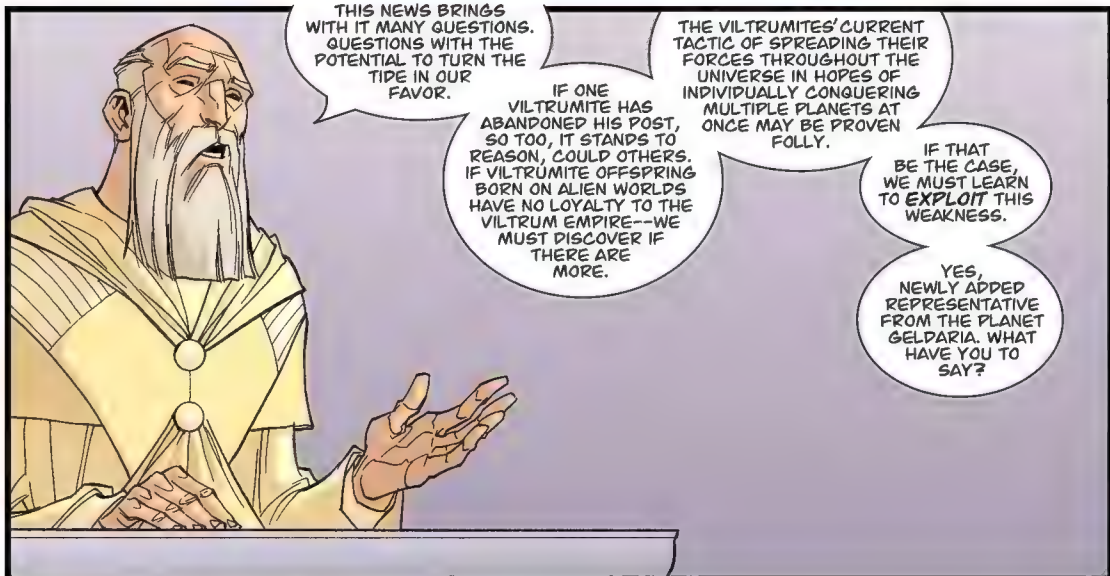
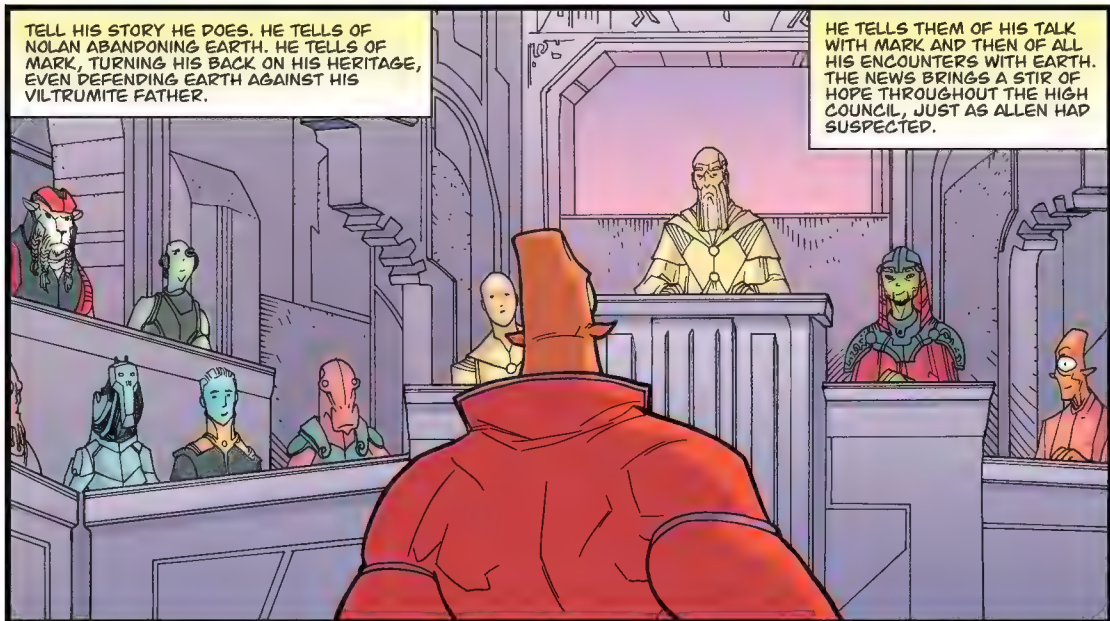
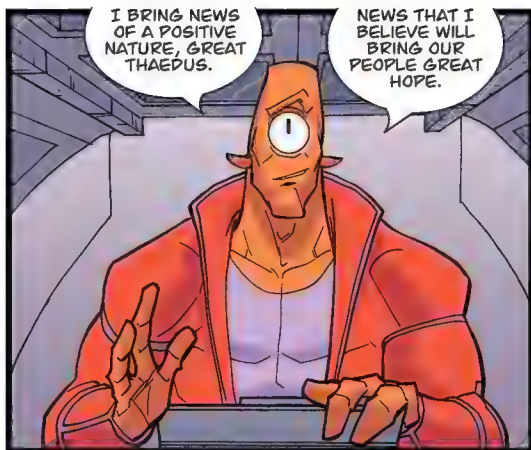
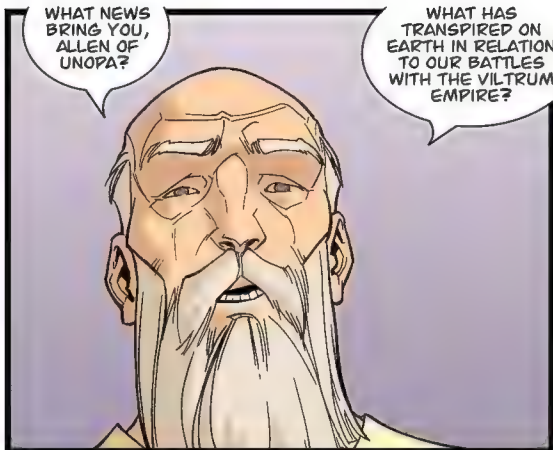


ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE AN EQUAL VOTE IN ALL MATTERS. EVERY MATTER REGARDING THE COALITION MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.

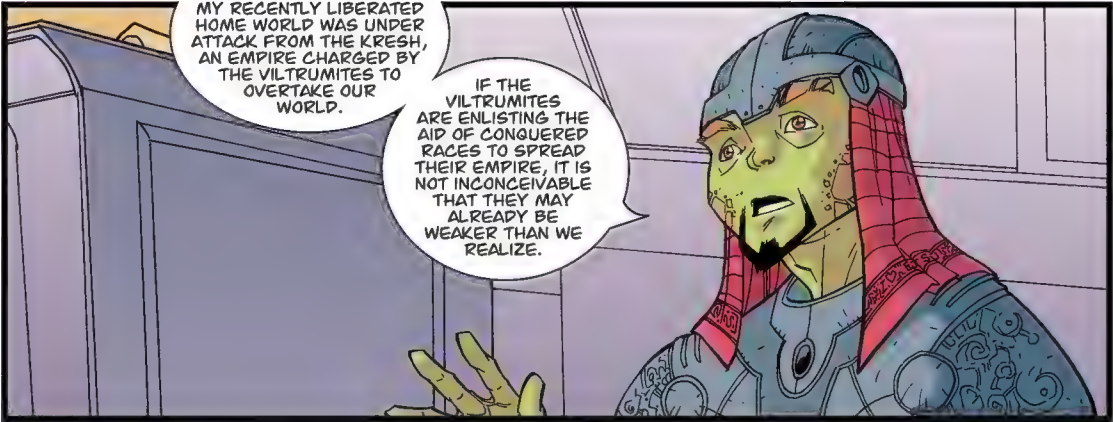


THIS IS WHO ALLEN HAS COME TO SEE.

THIS IS WHO ALLEN ANSWERS TO.





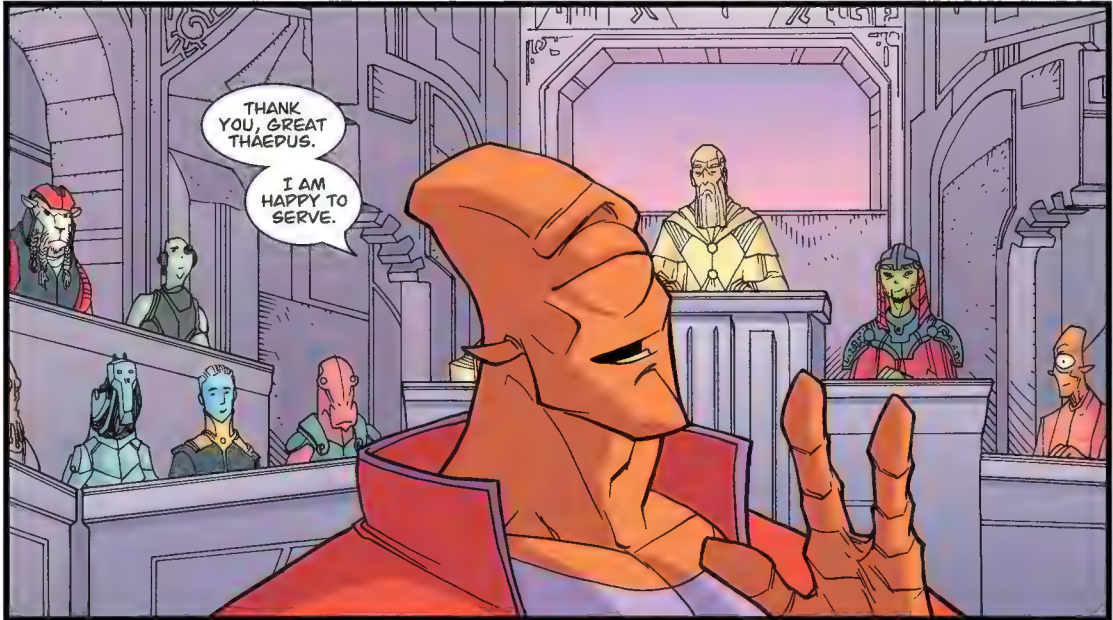


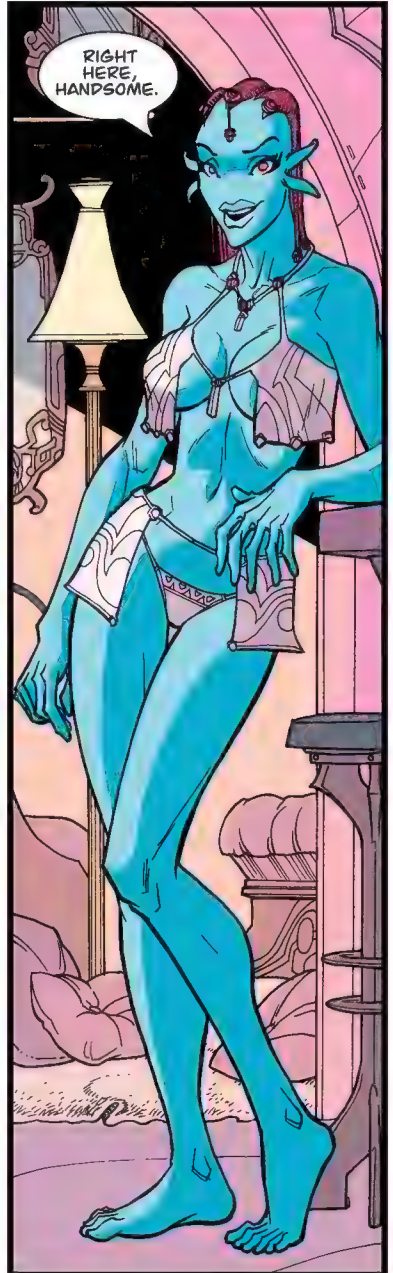
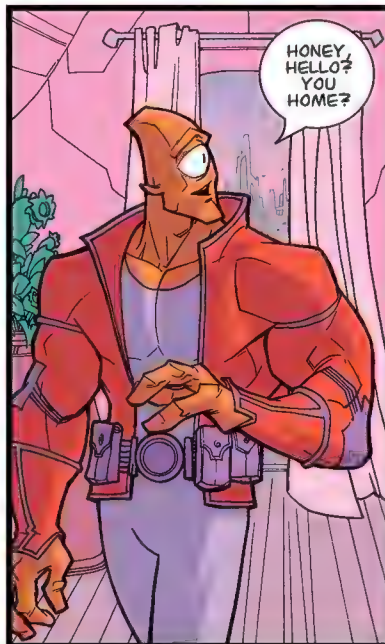
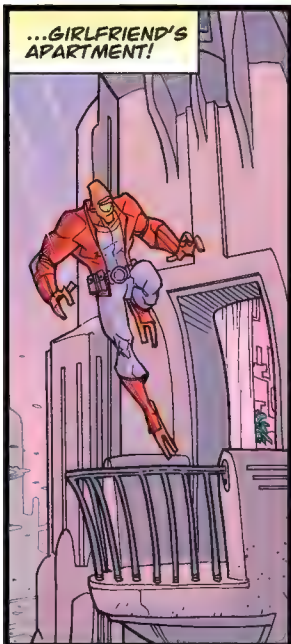
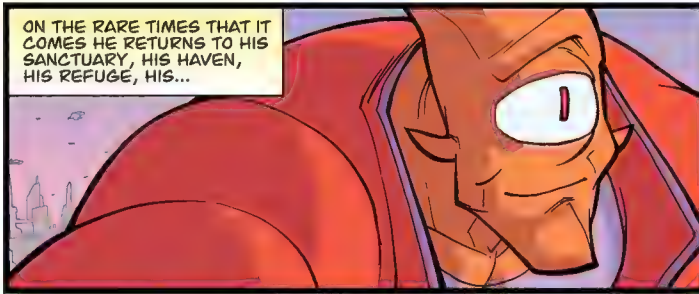
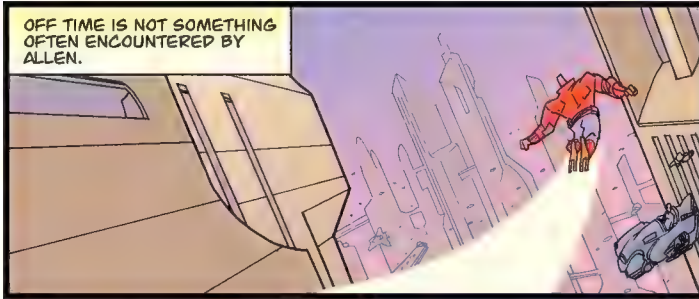
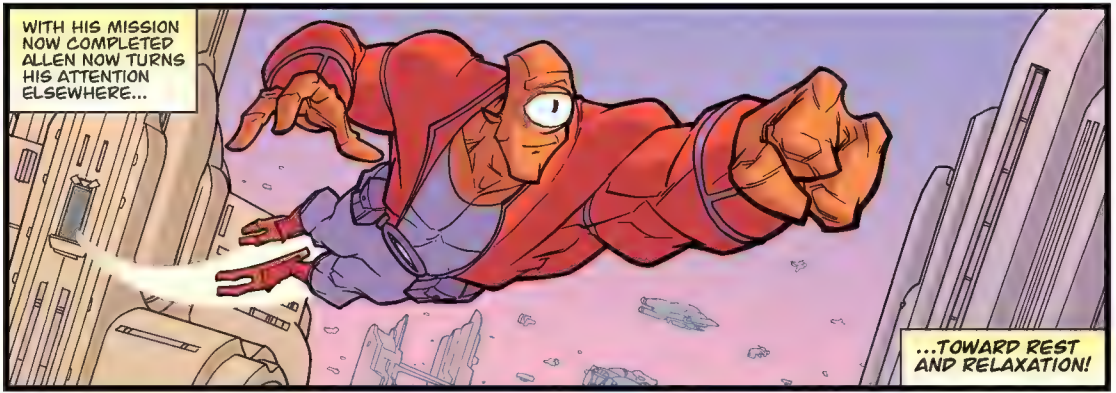
FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK OUT THESE ROGUE VILTRUMITES AND ATTEMPT TO SWAY THEM TO OUR CAUSE. THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE ALLIES.

THE ONE CALLED INVINCIBLE, THE OFFSPRING BORN ON EARTH IS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CAUSE. ANYTHING THAT WILL PREVENT THE EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF EARTH WILL GAIN HIS ASSISTANCE.

HE HAS ALREADY STATED AS MUCH.\*

\*ISSUE 13 AGAIN.







I HAVE MISSED YOU A GREAT DEAL, TELIA.

LIKEWISE, HON'. YOU IN THE MOOD FOR A LITTLE "CATCHING UP?" I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.

TELIA-- PLEASE. YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T--

WHAT? WHAT CAN'T YOU DO, ALLEN?

WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON THINGS YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO? PHYSICAL LOVE IS FORBIDDEN AMONG MY PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER RACES.

I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR RULES, ALLEN. "ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR PEOPLE" AND ALL THAT CRAP.

I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE WERE ENDANGERED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE IN NO DANGER OF EXTINCTION NOW.

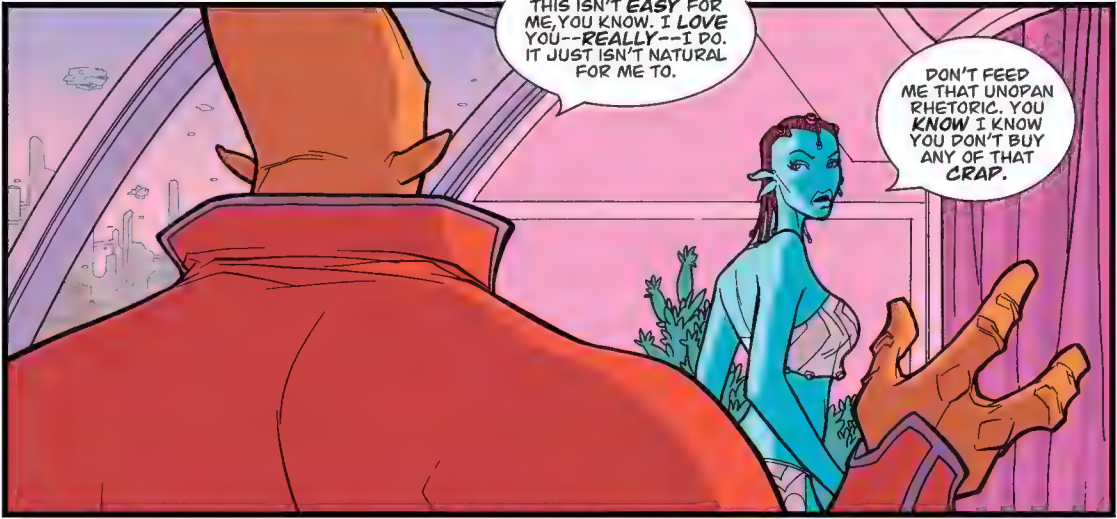
YOU'VE ALL JUST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR BACKWARDS METHODS.

YOUR BREEDING FACTORIES MAY BE MORE EFFICIENT BUT I PROMISE YOU THEY'RE NOT AS FUN.

OH, NO. HOW CAN I TELL TELIA HOW MUCH I TRULY FEEL FOR HER WITHOUT BREAKING UNOPAN'S MOST SACRED LAWS?

I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT TELIA--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE TO LOSE HER. BUT--MY PEOPLE NEED ME--I CAN'T WASTE MYSELF ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH HER...

...CAN I?



THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW. I LOVE YOU--REALLY--I DO. IT JUST ISN'T NATURAL FOR ME TO.

DON'T FEED ME THAT UNOPAN RHETORIC. YOU KNOW I KNOW YOU DON'T BUY ANY OF THAT CRAP.



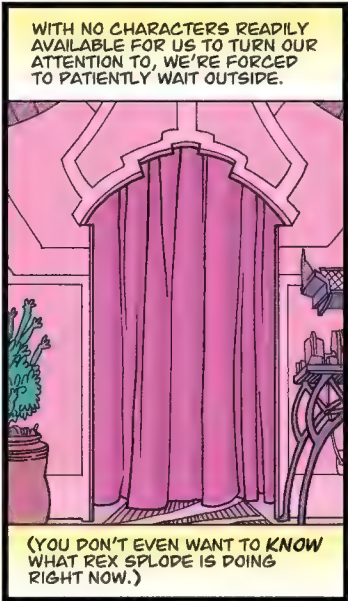
BUT IF I'M DISCOVERED-- I COULD BE STRIPPED OF MY TITLE. I'VE GOT A DEPOSIT CYCLE COMING UP. IF MY LEVELS AREN'T ABOVE STANDARD--THEY'LL REALIZE--



THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU BEFORE. DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MONTHS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS?  
GET IN HERE.



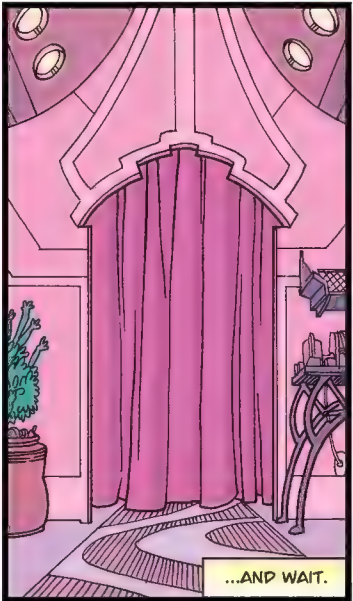
OKAY, OKAY! YOU WIN.  
LET'S GO.



WITH NO CHARACTERS READILY AVAILABLE FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO, WE'RE FORCED TO PATIENTLY WAIT OUTSIDE.  
(YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT REX SPODE IS DOING RIGHT NOW.)



YES, OUT OF COURTESY FOR ALLEN, TELIA, AND ALL THE YOUNGER READERS IN THE AUDIENCE WE'LL JUST WAIT...



...AND WAIT.



LATER--AFTER THE REUNION HAS COMPLETED ITS CARNAL FESTIVITIES--

OUR ATTENTION REFOCUSSES ON ALLEN, HIGH ABOVE TALESORIA, CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

IT HAS BEEN MERE HOURS AND ALLEN AND TELIA NOW FIND THEMSELVES ENJOYING A LATE BREAKFAST AT THEIR FAVORITE DINER.



OH, MAN! I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISS FRESH KANZLOK WHILE I'M OUT ON MY MISSIONS UNTIL I GET BACK.

I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING I MISS MORE.

I CAN THINK OF ONE THING.

HMM?

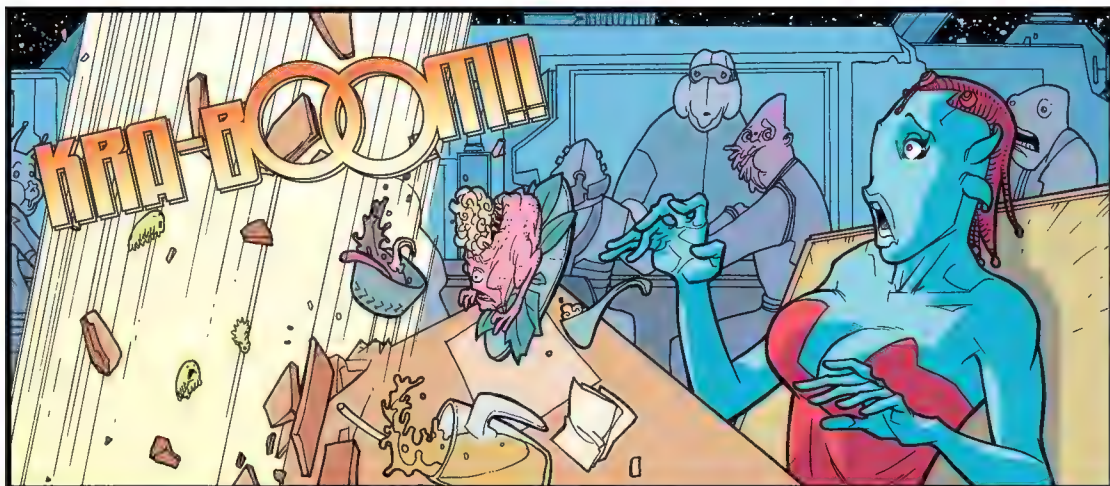
YES OF COURSE--THAT... AND YOU. I MEANT FOOD SPECIFICALLY. I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THALMUN BARS AND OTHER SWEETS BUT I NEVER THINK ABOUT KANZLOK UNTIL I GET BACK.

AND PLEASE-- DON'T SPEAK OF OUR--YOU KNOW-- IN PUBLIC. IT'S TOO RISKY.

WHAT? LIKE THERE'S SOME UNOPAN SPY SITTING AT THE NEXT BOOTH OVER THAT'S GOING TO SEE YOU CONVERSING WITH ME, PIECE TOGETHER THE MEANING OF OUR HALF FINISHED STATEMENTS AND ARREST YOU ON THE SPOT?

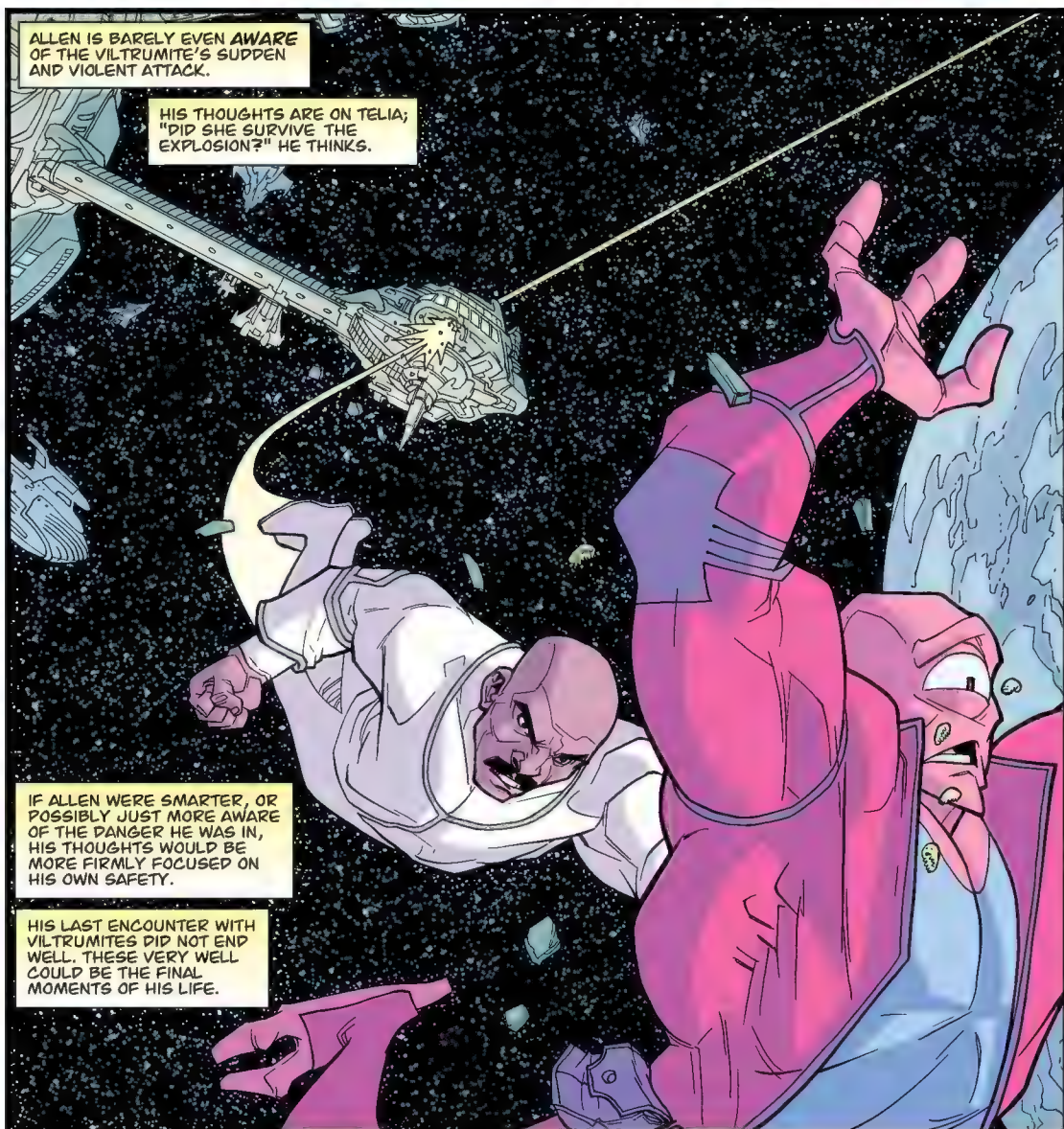
THAT'S RIDICUL--





ALLEN IS BARELY EVEN AWARE OF THE VILTRUMITE'S SUDDEN AND VIOLENT ATTACK.

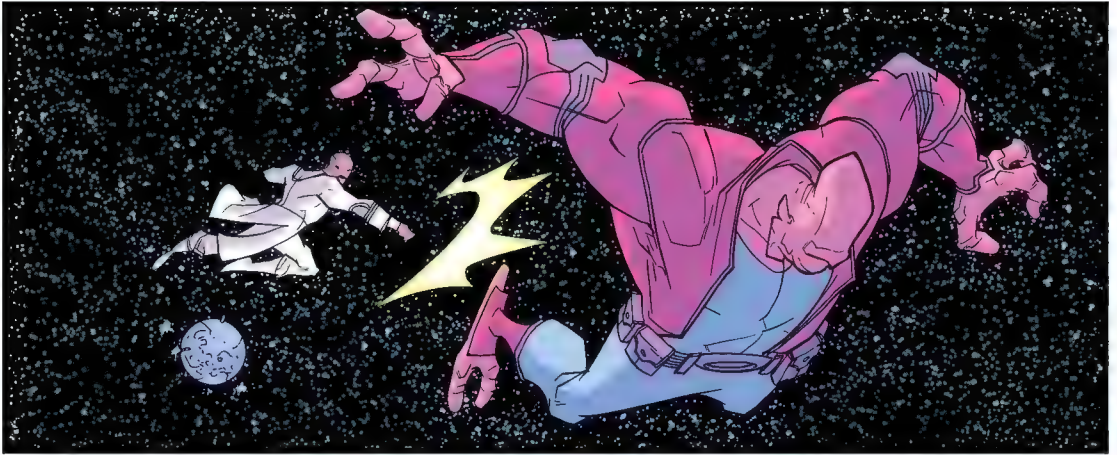
HIS THOUGHTS ARE ON TELIA; "DID SHE SURVIVE THE EXPLOSION?" HE THINKS.



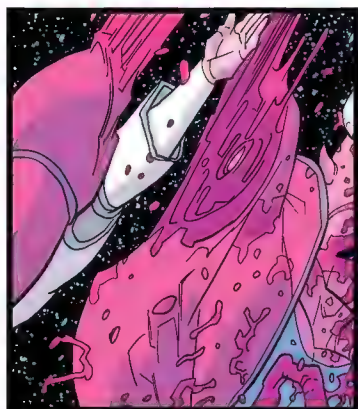
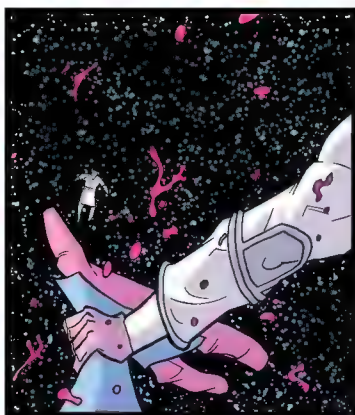
IF ALLEN WERE SMARTER, OR POSSIBLY JUST MORE AWARE OF THE DANGER HE WAS IN, HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BE MORE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON HIS OWN SAFETY.

HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH VILTRUMITES DID NOT END WELL. THESE VERY WELL COULD BE THE FINAL MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE.





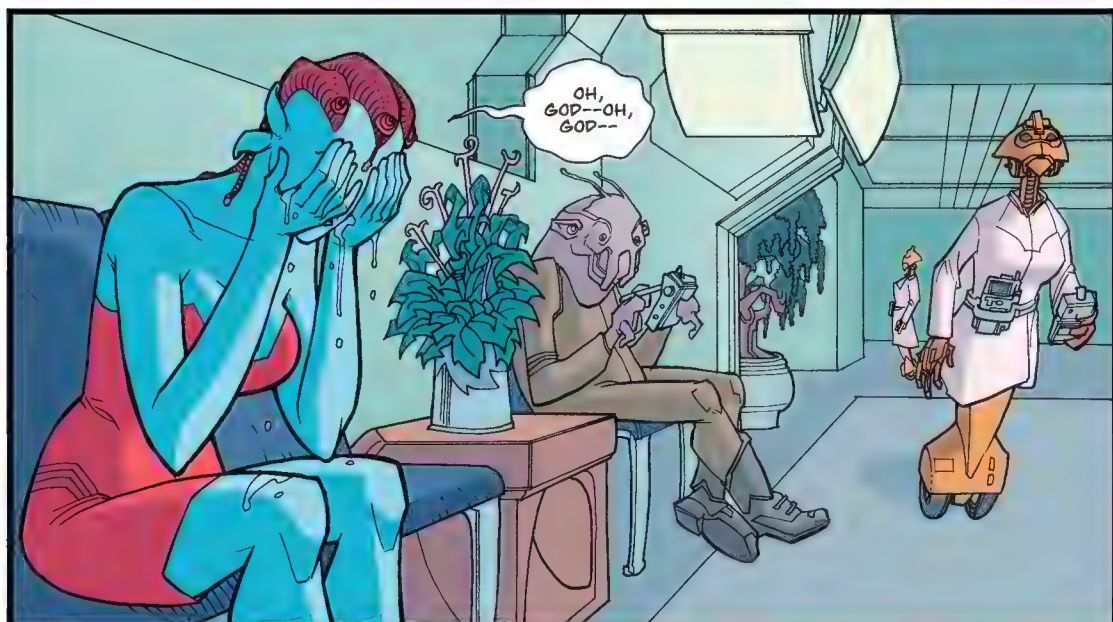
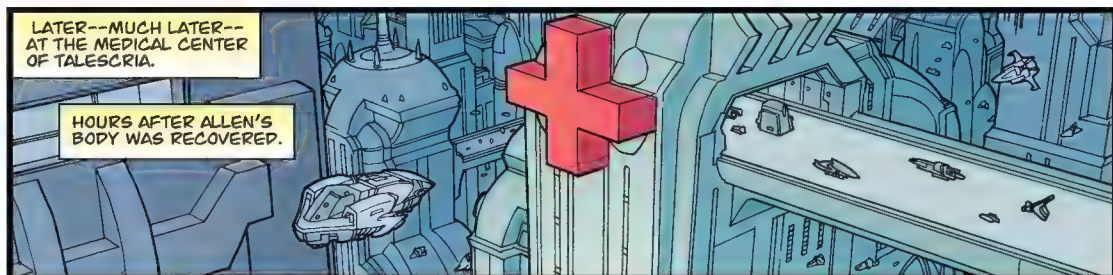










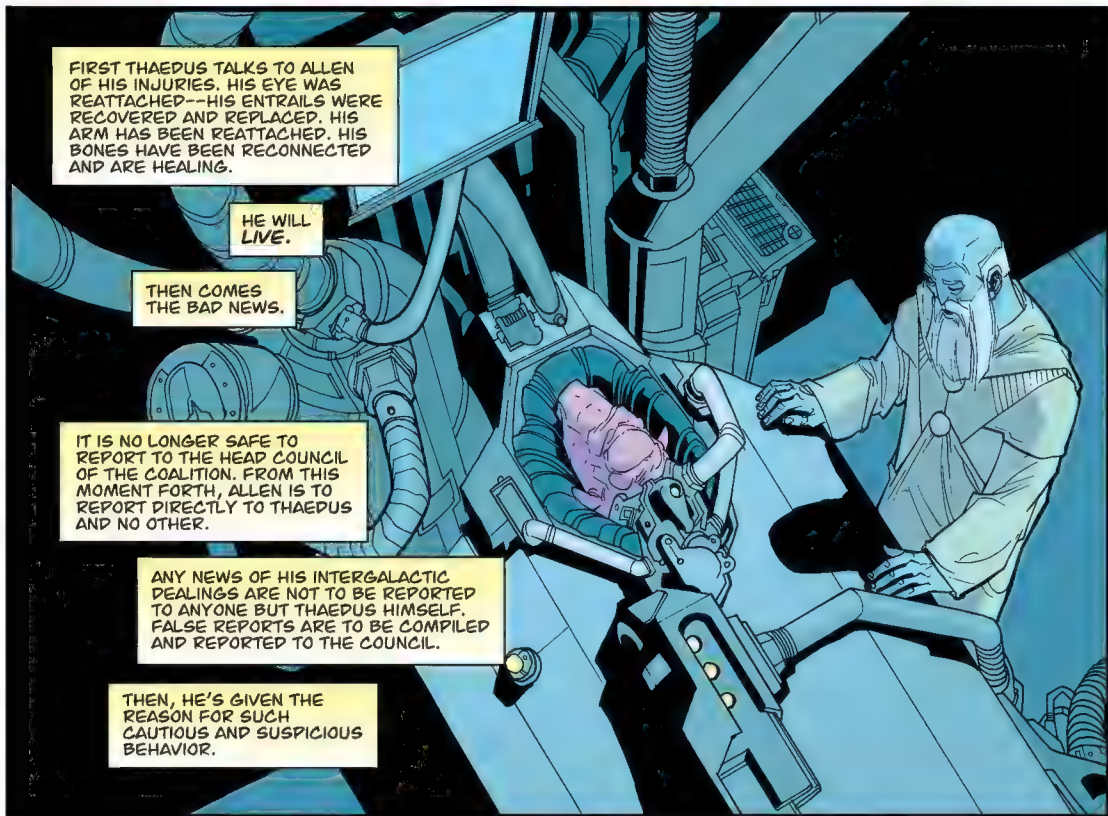






DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE OR REPLY. THOSE FACILITIES WILL BE BEYOND YOUR GRASP FOR SOME TIME--BUT LISTEN.

I KNOW YOU CAN LISTEN.



FIRST THAEDUS TALKS TO ALLEN OF HIS INJURIES. HIS EYE WAS REATTACHED--HIS ENTRAILS WERE RECOVERED AND REPLACED. HIS ARM HAS BEEN REATTACHED. HIS BONES HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED AND ARE HEALING.

HE WILL LIVE.

THEN COMES THE BAD NEWS.

IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO REPORT TO THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION. FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, ALLEN IS TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THAEDUS AND NO OTHER.

ANY NEWS OF HIS INTERGALACTIC DEALINGS ARE NOT TO BE REPORTED TO ANYONE BUT THAEDUS HIMSELF. FALSE REPORTS ARE TO BE COMPILED AND REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL.

THEN, HE'S GIVEN THE REASON FOR SUCH CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.



THERE IS A MOLE WITHIN THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION.

UNTIL HE IS DISCOVERED AND ELIMINATED-- NO ONE IS SAFE. THE VERY COALITION ITSELF IS IN JEOPARDY.

THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END.



I-- I WAS THINKING  
MAYBE I COULD  
SPEND THE NIGHT  
HERE. Y'KNOW, SINCE  
YOU DON'T HAVE A  
ROOMMATE OR  
ANYTHING.

I  
JUST--  
I WANTED  
TO SLEEP  
NEXT TO  
YOU.



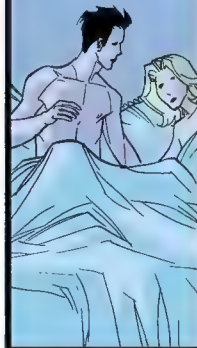
LOOK AT THE CLOCK,  
SILLY. YOU *DID*  
SLEEP NEXT TO  
ME--IT'S ALMOST  
MORNING. YOU  
NEED TO GET OUT  
OF HERE BEFORE  
THE SUN COMES  
UP AND IT'LL BE  
EASIER TO SPOT  
YOU. I KNOW  
YOU'RE SUPER FAST  
AND ALL THAT, BUT  
I DON'T WANT TO  
RISK IT.



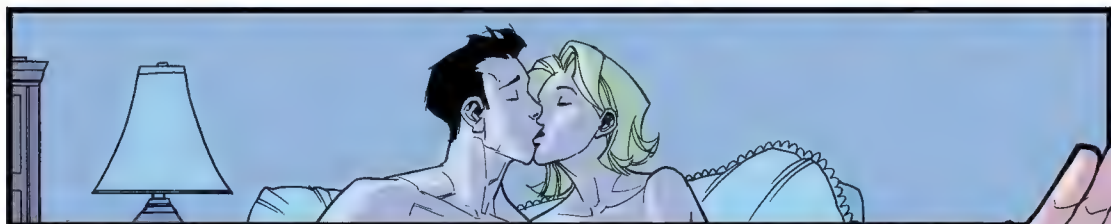
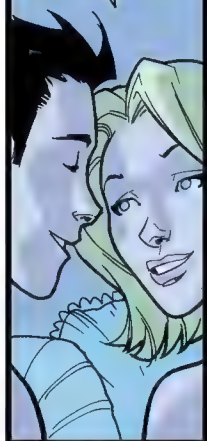
OKAY--SORRY.  
JUST, UH... LET  
ME GET MY  
CLOTHES  
ON.

MARK?


YEAH?



LAST  
NIGHT WAS  
PERFECT.





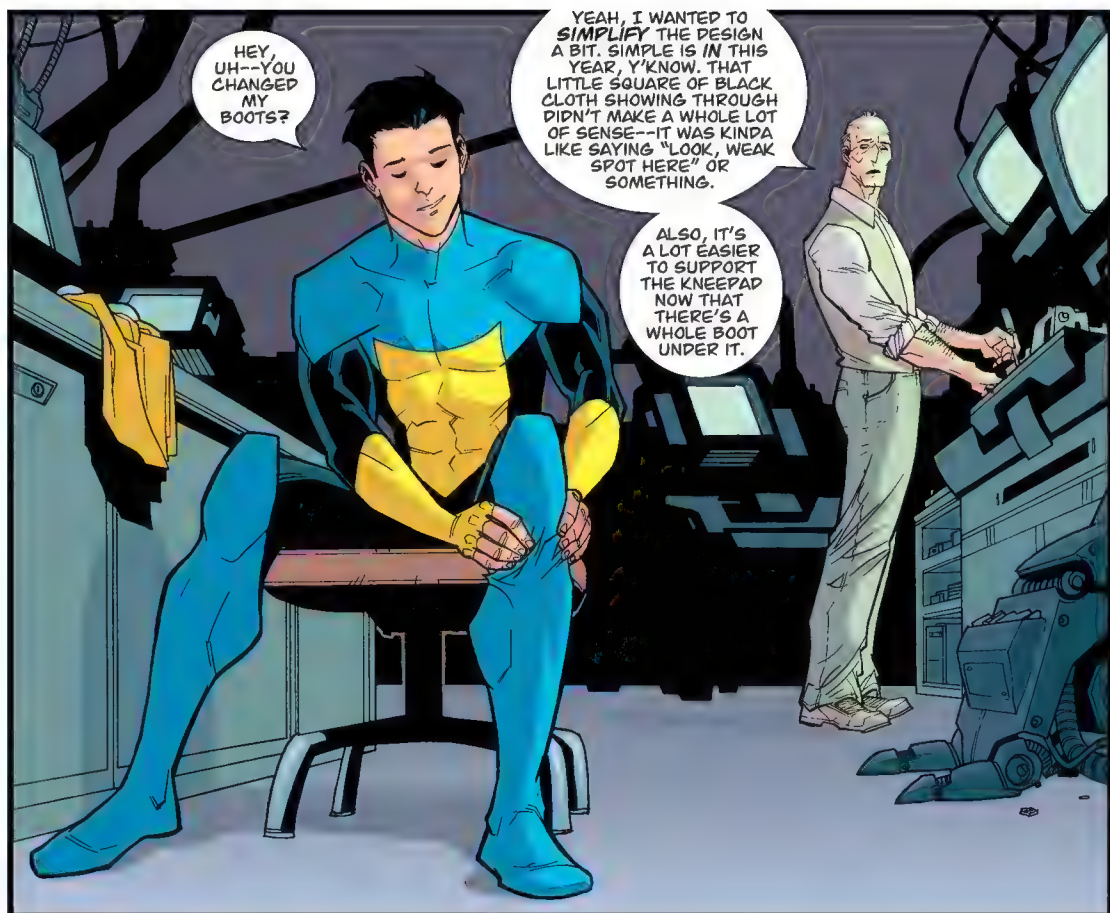


**\*\*SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIBLEHEADS.**

# CHAPTER SIX



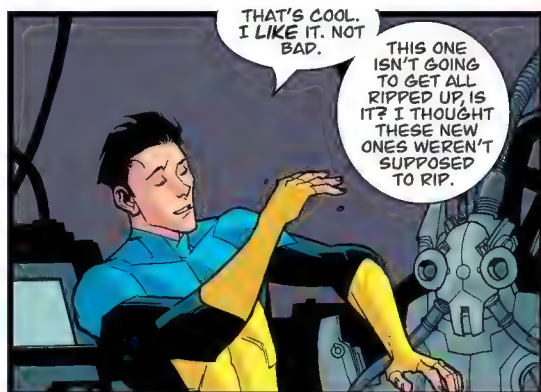




HEY,  
UH--YOU  
CHANGED  
MY  
BOOTS?

YEAH, I WANTED TO  
*SIMPLIFY* THE DESIGN  
A BIT. SIMPLE IS IN THIS  
YEAR, Y'KNOW. THAT  
LITTLE SQUARE OF BLACK  
CLOTH SHOWING THROUGH  
DIDN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT  
OF SENSE--IT WAS KINDA  
LIKE SAYING "LOOK, WEAK  
SPOT HERE" OR  
SOMETHING.

ALSO, IT'S  
A LOT EASIER  
TO SUPPORT  
THE KNEEPAD  
NOW THAT  
THERE'S A  
WHOLE BOOT  
UNDER IT.



THAT'S COOL.  
I LIKE IT. NOT  
BAD.

THIS ONE  
ISN'T GOING  
TO GET ALL  
RIPPED UP, IS  
IT? I THOUGHT  
THESE NEW  
ONES WEREN'T  
SUPPOSED TO RIP.



I DON'T REALLY  
KNOW WHAT TO TELL  
YOU ON THAT FRONT.  
THAT FABRIC WAS  
SOLD TO ME AS  
UNRIPPABLE--IT WAS  
A GOVERNMENT  
CLOSEOUT--IT'S  
PROBABLY  
CRAP.

I MADE THIS  
ONE FROM A  
DIFFERENT ROLL...  
MAYBE THE  
OTHER BATCH  
WAS BAD.



MARK--UM--  
WHEN'S THE  
LAST TIME YOU  
TALKED TO YOUR  
MOTHER?

UH...

I DON'T  
KNOW, A  
WEEK...  
TWO?

TRY A MONTH. FOR A NORMAL  
COLLEGE KID THAT WOULDN'T  
BE A BIG DEAL, YOU'RE  
GROWING UP--IT'S GOOD TO  
GET AWAY FROM THE NEST--  
BUT, SON--SHE KNOWS  
YOU CAN COME VISIT  
HER IN A SPLIT  
SECOND.

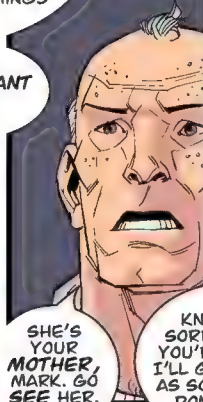


IT'S  
HURTING  
HER.

I KNOW--I KEEP MEANING TO  
SEE HER BUT THEN SOMETHING  
COMES UP. AND THAT HOUSE--  
IT'S GOT SO MANY MEMORIES.  
SINCE I GOT OUT OF IT, I'VE  
BEEN ABLE TO PUT THINGS  
OUT OF MY  
MIND.



I'M  
RELUCTANT  
TO GO  
BACK.



SHE'S  
YOUR  
MOTHER,  
MARK.  
GO  
SEE HER.



I  
KNOW. I'M  
SORRY, ART--  
YOU'RE RIGHT.  
I'LL GO SEE HER  
AS SOON AS I'M  
DONE HERE.

IT'LL DO YOU  
GOOD TO GET OUT  
OF THAT DORM  
ROOM, AWAY FROM  
ALL THE PARTIES  
AND WHATEVER  
ELSE IS GOING  
ON THERE.



HEH--I'VE  
BEEN AWAY  
FROM MY  
DORM ROOM  
PLENTY.



I DIDN'T  
EVEN SLEEP  
THERE LAST  
NIGHT.



OH?

WELL! I MEAN!  
UH! IT'S JUST  
THAT MY GIRL-  
FRIEND AND I--  
UM--NO, UH.  
I--UH.



UM...



YOU CAN  
STOP RIGHT  
THERE, MARK.  
I DON'T NEED  
TO HEAR ANY  
MORE THAN  
THAT.



YOU'RE AT A GOOD  
AGE FOR THAT--JUST  
BE CAREFUL. YOU SEEM  
HAPPY. IT'S A GOOD  
LOOK FOR YOU--A  
WELCOME  
CHANGE.

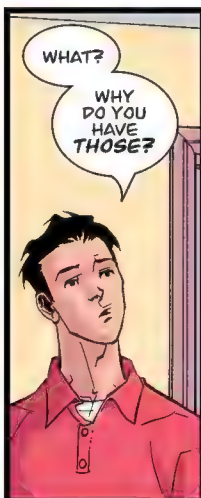
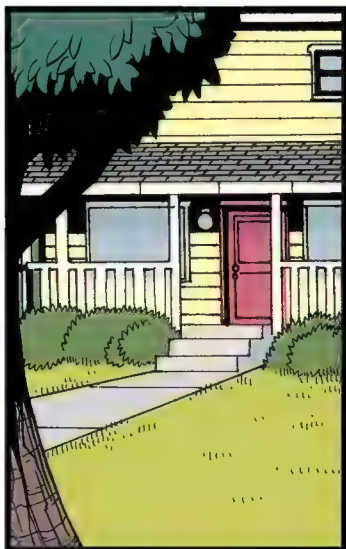
HAPPY?

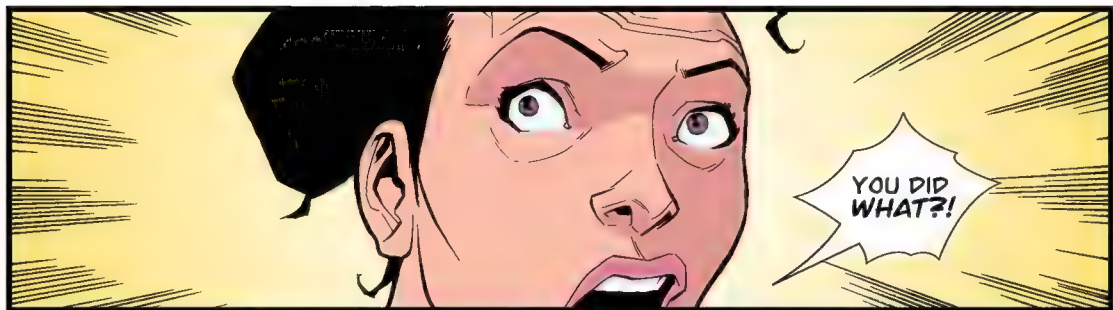


YEAH...

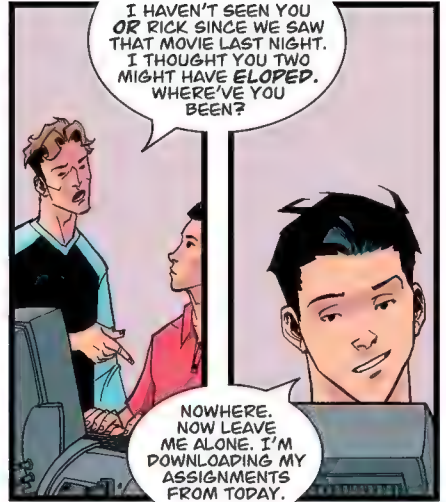
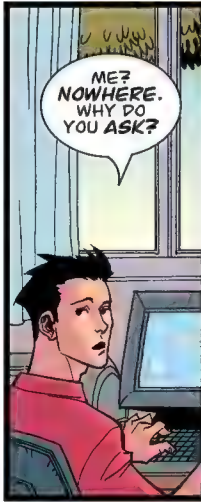
I  
GUESS  
I AM.















TIME  
TO MAKE  
THE  
DONUTS.

I THINK  
I SPEAK ON  
BEHALF OF BOTH  
OF US WHEN I  
SAY IT HAS BEEN  
AN HONOR TO WORK  
ON SUCH A PROJECT  
WITH YOU,  
**ANGSTROM  
LEVY.**



YES, THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING THAT RANKS AMONG OUR **HIGHEST** ACHIEVEMENTS--AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MULTI-VERSE.

TO THINK--IN MERE MOMENTS WE'LL DOWNLOAD THE MEMORIES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE ABILITY TO SHIFT FROM ONE DIMENSION TO THE NEXT WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

WE MAY VERY WELL BE CHANGING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY ACROSS THE MULTI-VERSE.

WE'RE READY WHEN YOU ARE.

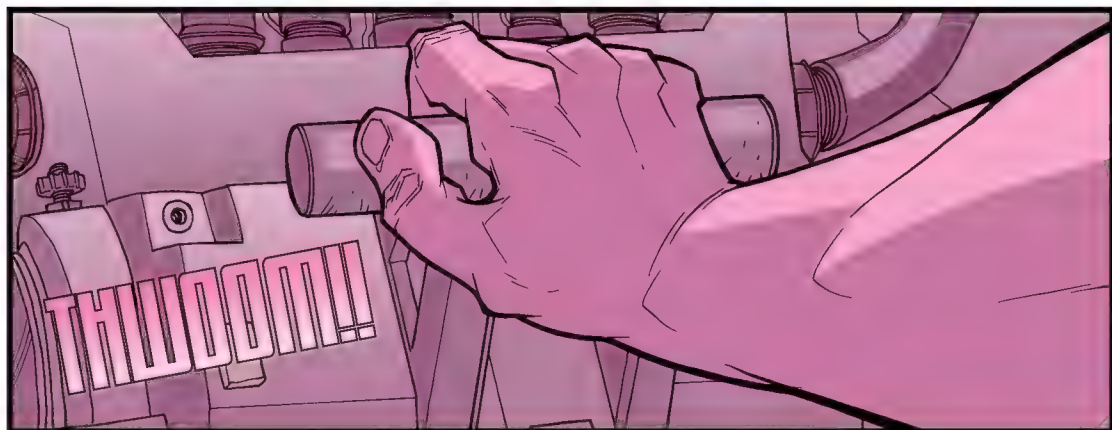
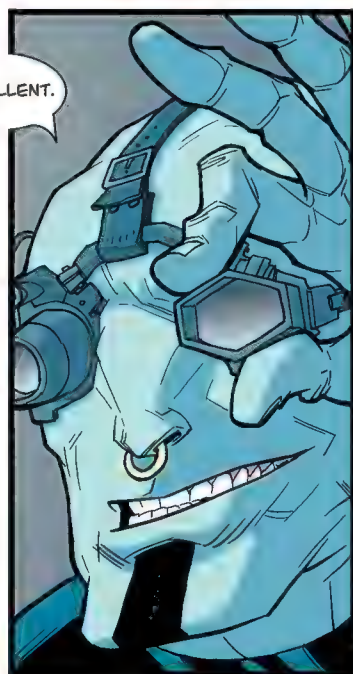
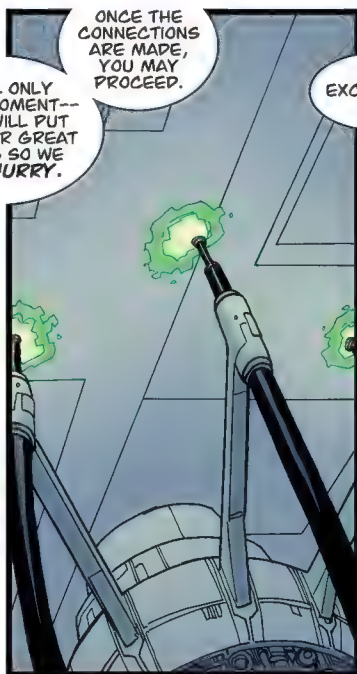


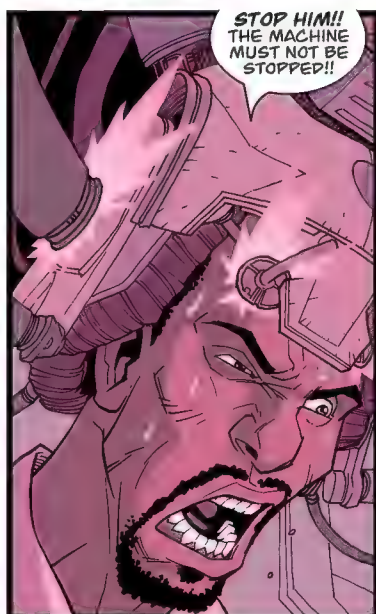
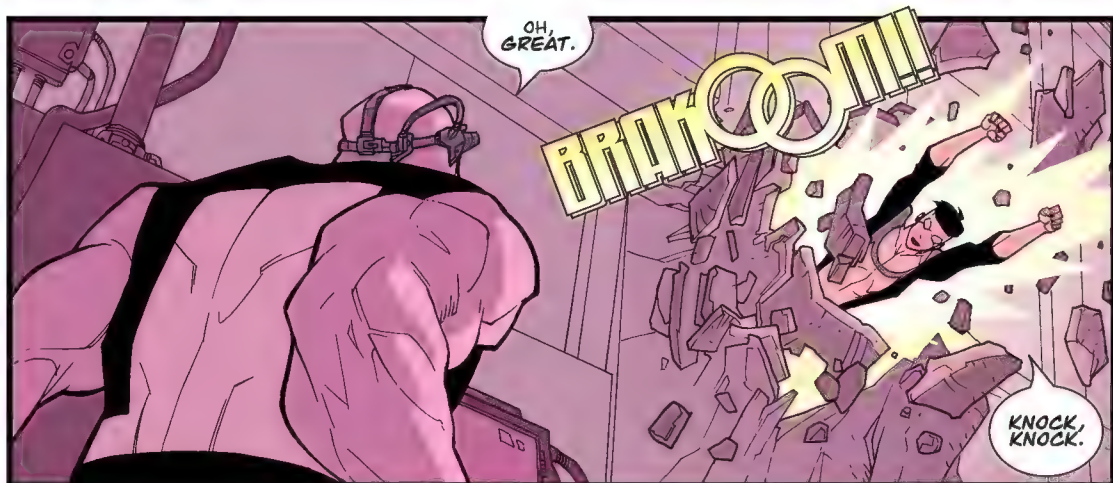
GIVE ME A MOMENT TO LINK OUR MACHINE TO THE ONES IN OUR **SISTER** DIMENSIONS.

IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT-- BUT IT WILL PUT ME UNDER GREAT STRESS SO WE MUST HURRY.

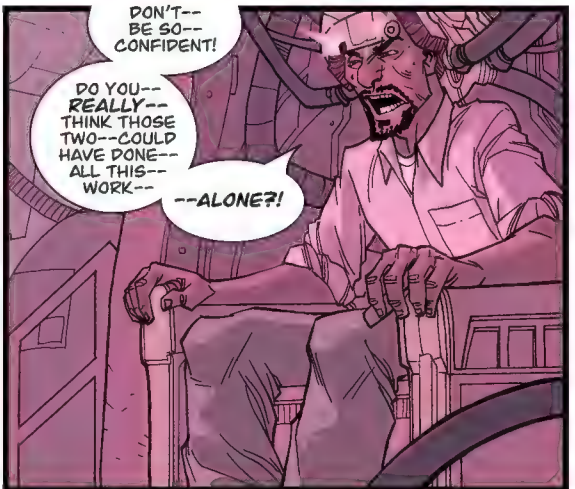
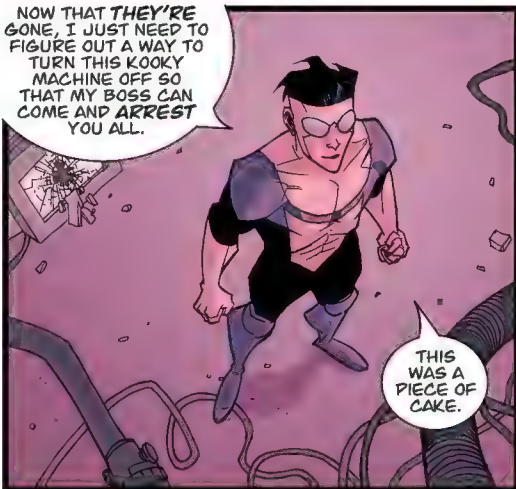
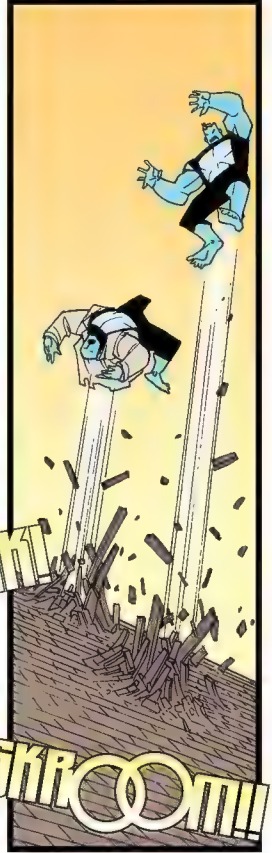
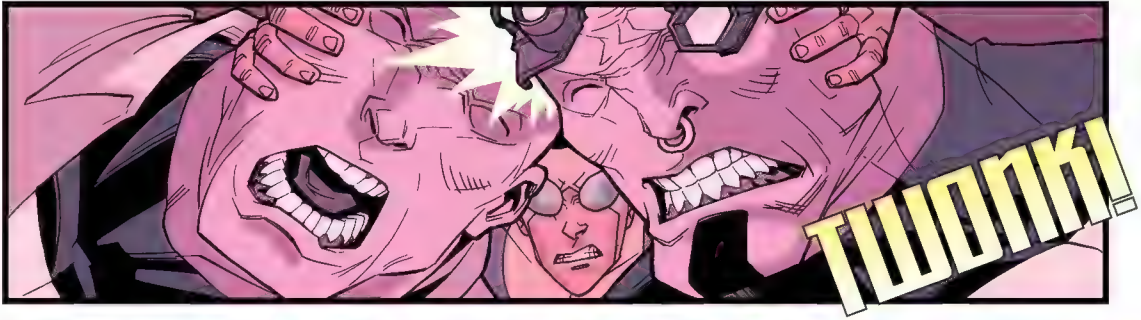
ONCE THE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE, YOU MAY PROCEED.

EXCELLENT.

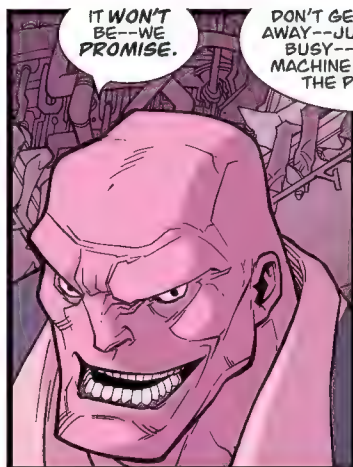
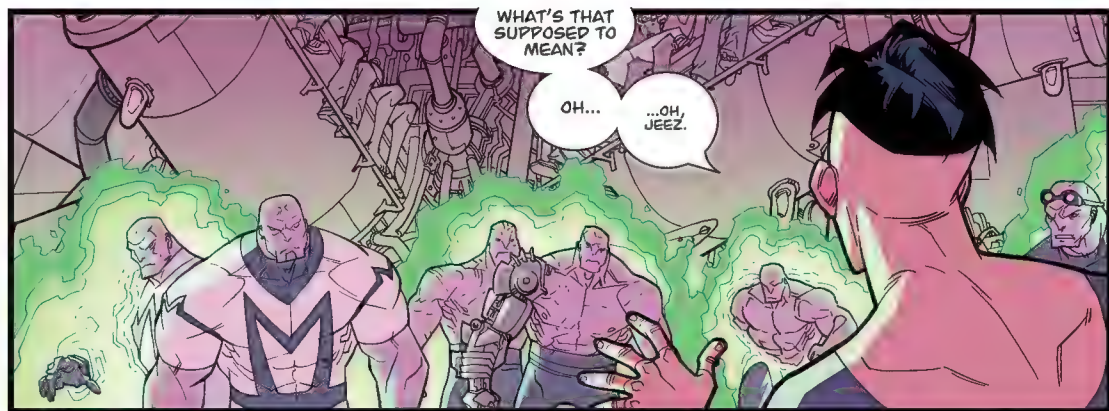














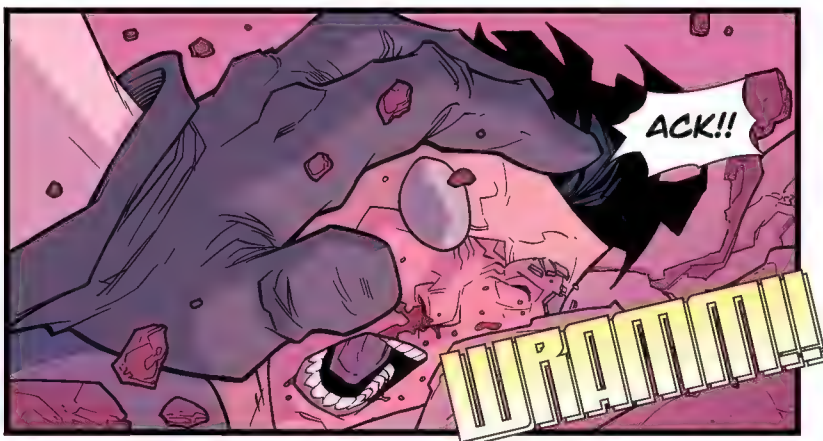
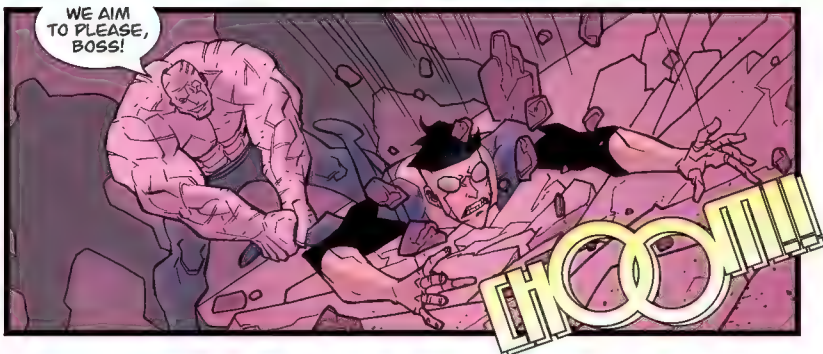


STAY  
BACK!

THAT WAS AN  
IMPRESSIVE  
PUNCH. IT'S A  
GOOD THING  
HE WASN'T  
ALONE.

GOOD  
FOR US, I  
MEAN.

**KRAK!**





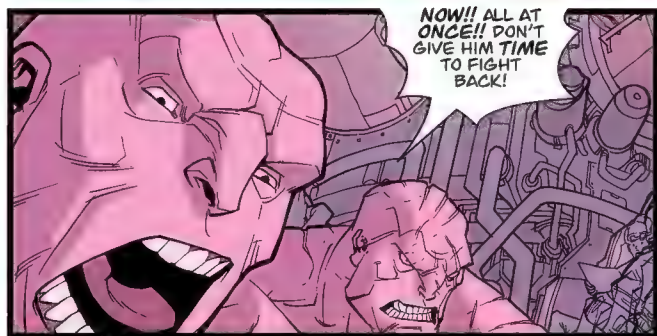
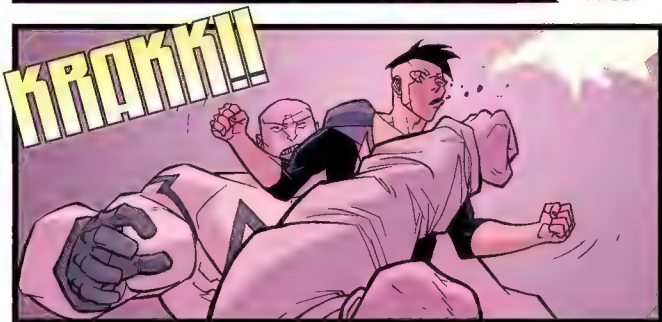


YOU THINK  
I CAN'T HURT  
YOU?! YOU THINK  
I WON'T TRY?!  
I WON'T LET  
YOU KILL  
ME!

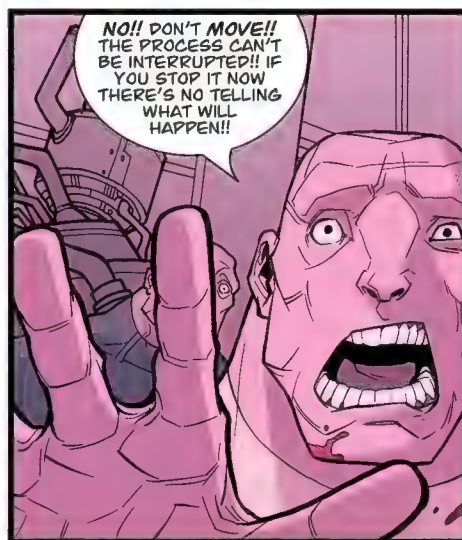
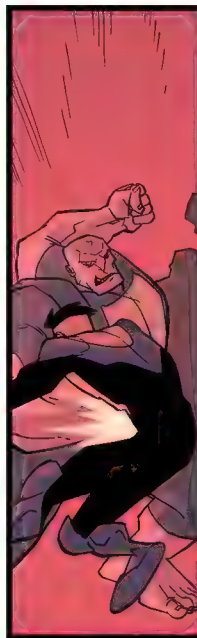
**STOP  
FIGHTING  
ME--OR BE  
READY FOR  
WHAT'S COMING.  
I PROMISE YOU  
I'VE BEEN  
HOLDING  
BACK!**

WE WANT  
EVERYTHING  
YOU'VE GOT,  
KID--GIVE IT  
TO US! DON'T  
HOLD  
BACK!

WE  
WELCOME  
THE  
CHALLENGE!

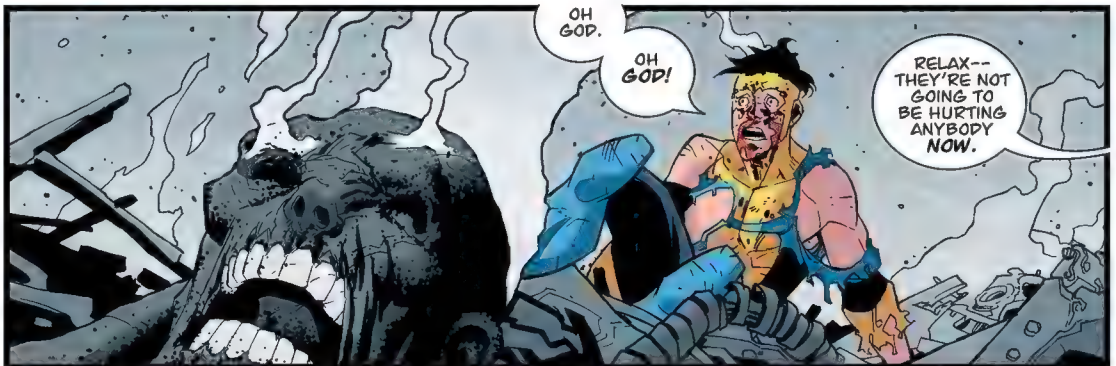
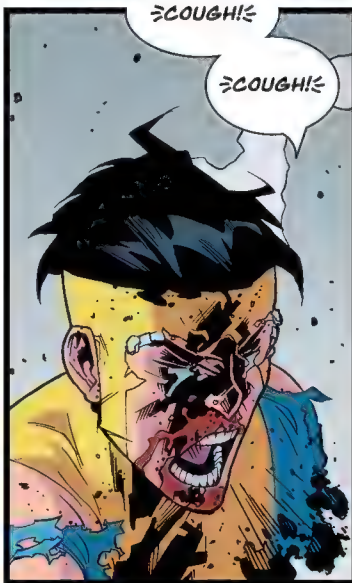






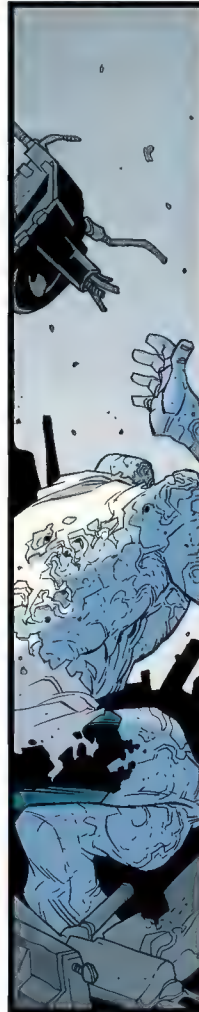
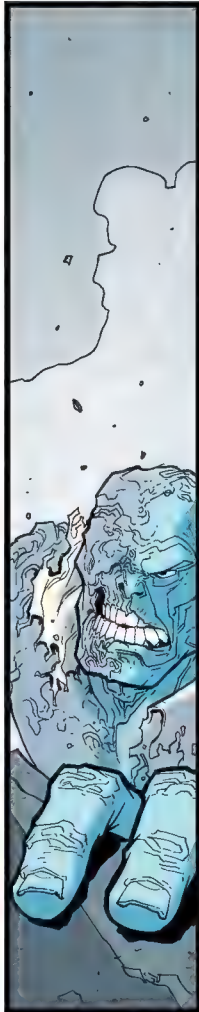
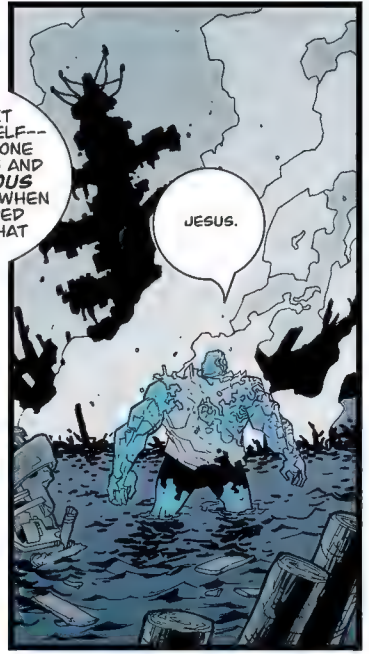




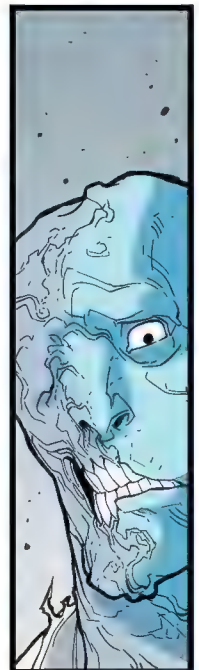
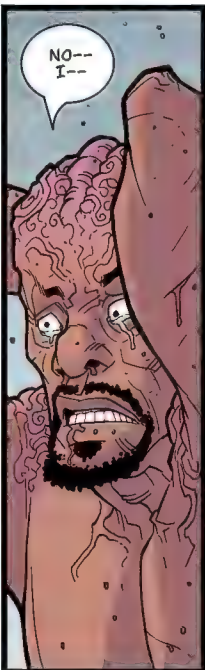
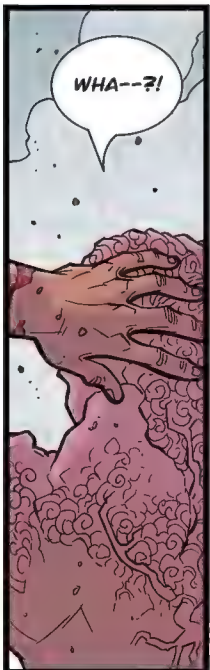




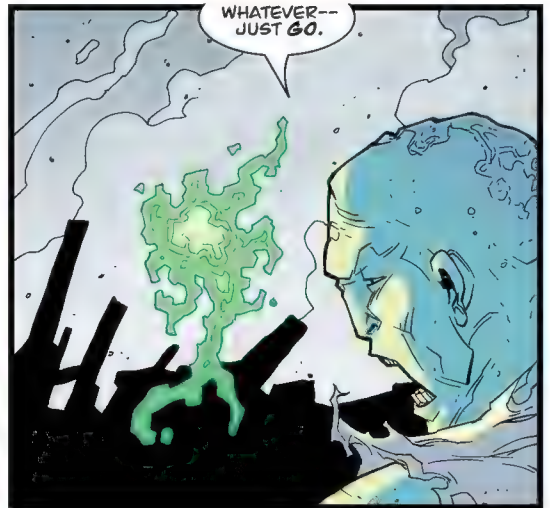
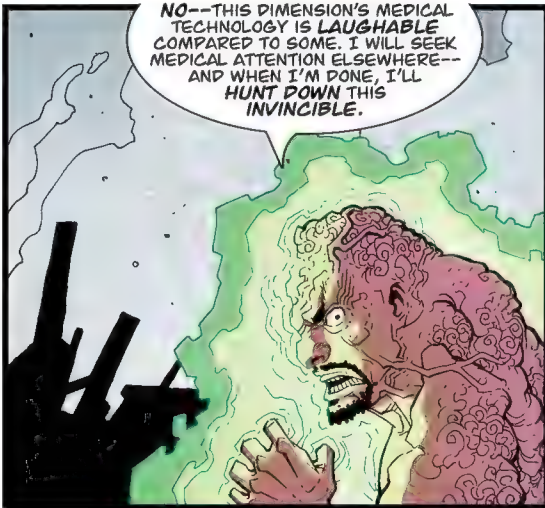












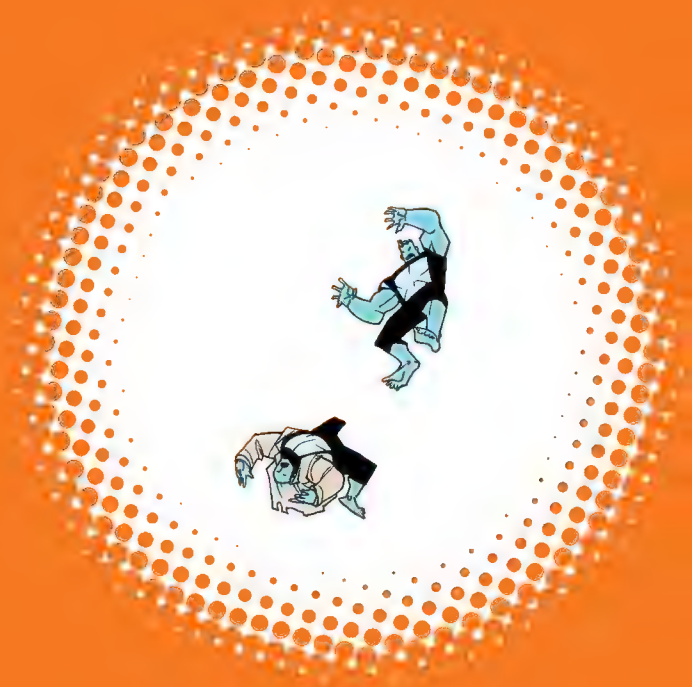


DON'T EVEN  
THINK ABOUT  
TAKING ME WITH  
YOU. IT'S NOT  
LIKE I NEED  
ANY MEDICAL  
ATTENTION OR  
ANYTHING.

DON'T  
WORRY  
ABOUT  
ME.

JERK.







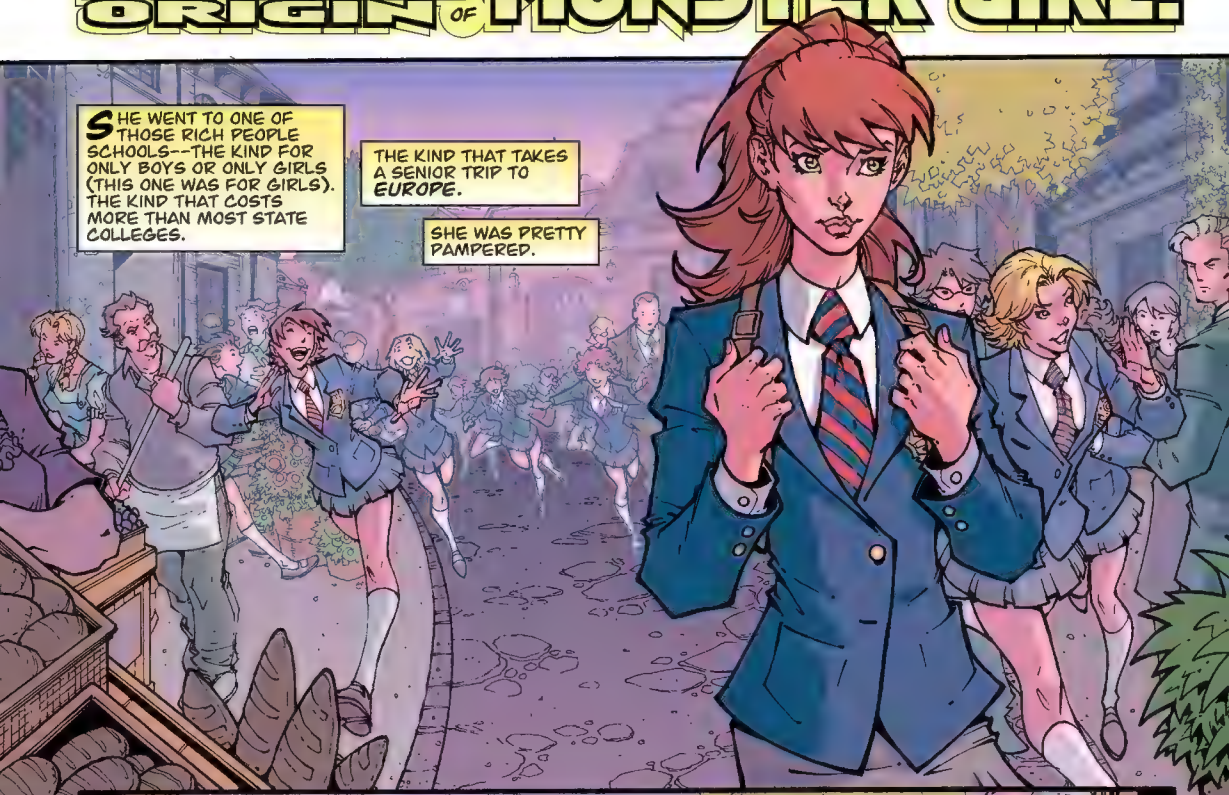


# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET OF MONSTER GIRL!

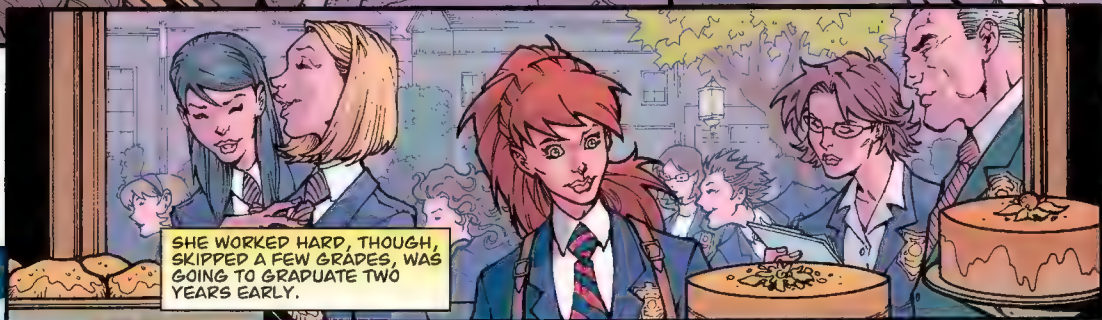
SHE WENT TO ONE OF THOSE RICH PEOPLE SCHOOLS--THE KIND FOR ONLY BOYS OR ONLY GIRLS (THIS ONE WAS FOR GIRLS). THE KIND THAT COSTS MORE THAN MOST STATE COLLEGES.

THE KIND THAT TAKES A SENIOR TRIP TO EUROPE.

SHE WAS PRETTY PAMPERED.

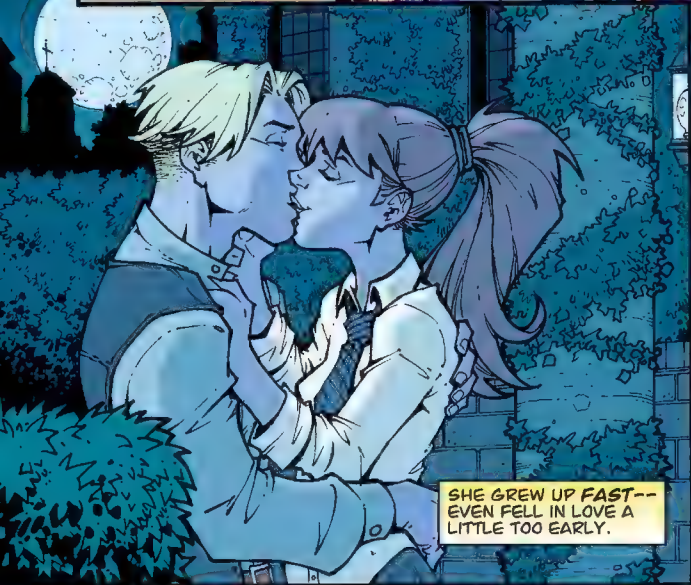


SHE WORKED HARD, THOUGH, SKIPPED A FEW GRADES, WAS GOING TO GRADUATE TWO YEARS EARLY.

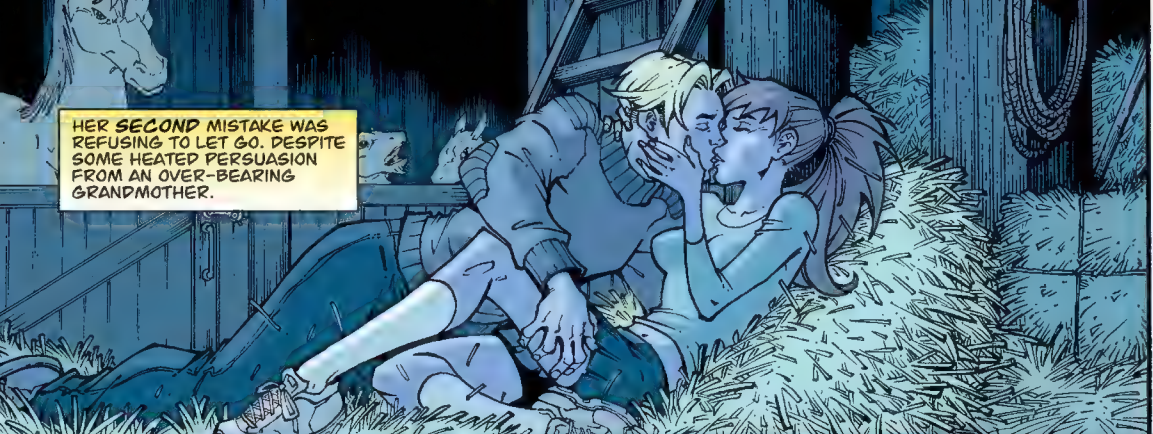


THAT WAS HER FIRST MISTAKE.

SHE GREW UP FAST--EVEN FELL IN LOVE A LITTLE TOO EARLY.








HER SECOND MISTAKE WAS REFUSING TO LET GO. DESPITE SOME HEATED PERSUASION FROM AN OVER-BEARING GRANDMOTHER.



HER THIRD MISTAKE WAS BEING SEEN.

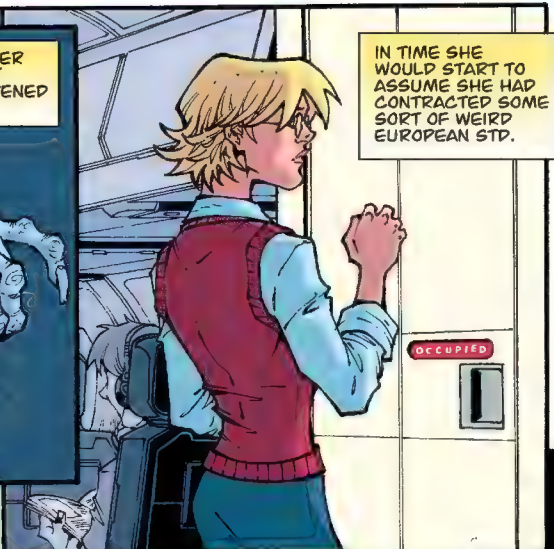


THE LOVE OF HER LIFE'S GRANDMOTHER WAS A PRACTITIONER OF ARCANIC MAGIC. SPELLS, INCANTATIONS, HEXES...


...CURSES.



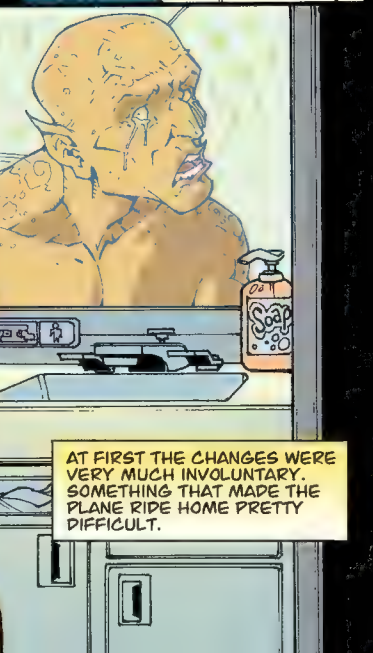
SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.



IN TIME SHE WOULD START TO ASSUME SHE HAD CONTRACTED SOME SORT OF WEIRD EUROPEAN STD.



OF COURSE, AT FIRST, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



AT FIRST THE CHANGES WERE VERY MUCH INVOLUNTARY. SOMETHING THAT MADE THE PLANE RIDE HOME PRETTY DIFFICULT.

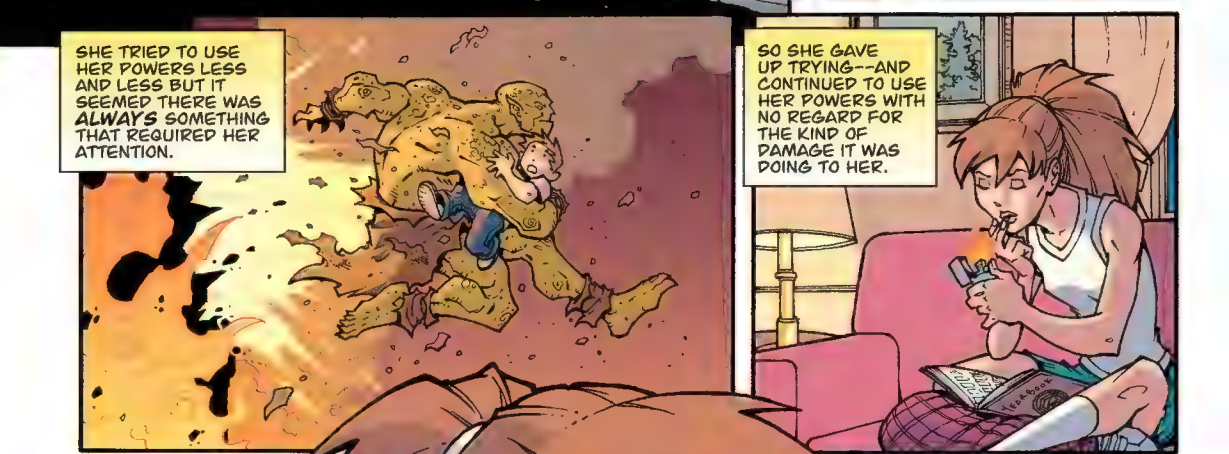




IT TOOK HER NO TIME AT ALL TO FIND A USE FOR HER NEW ABILITIES.

IT TOOK HER A LITTLE LONGER TO NOTICE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HER PHYSIOLOGY.

SHE EVENTUALLY PIECED EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THE MORE SHE USED HER NEW POWERS THE YOUNGER SHE WOULD GET--AND THE LARGER AND MORE POWERFUL HER OTHER FORM WOULD BECOME.



SHE TRIED TO USE HER POWERS LESS AND LESS BUT IT SEEMED THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED HER ATTENTION.

SO SHE GAVE UP TRYING--AND CONTINUED TO USE HER POWERS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE KIND OF DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO HER.

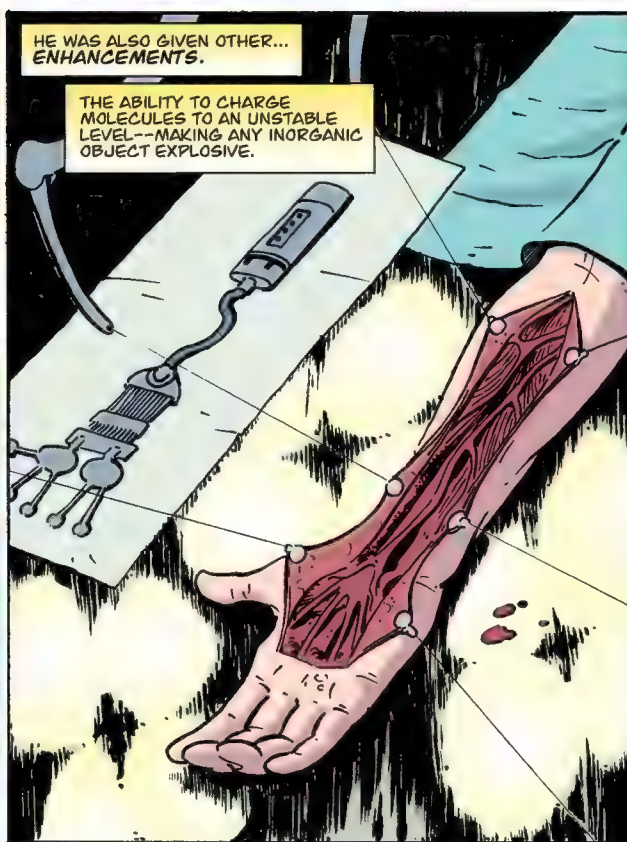
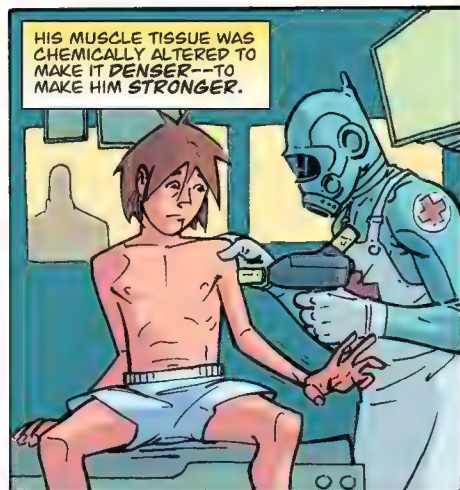
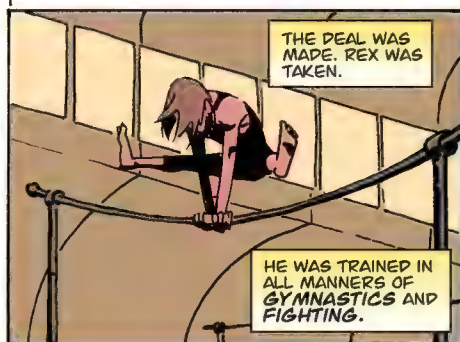
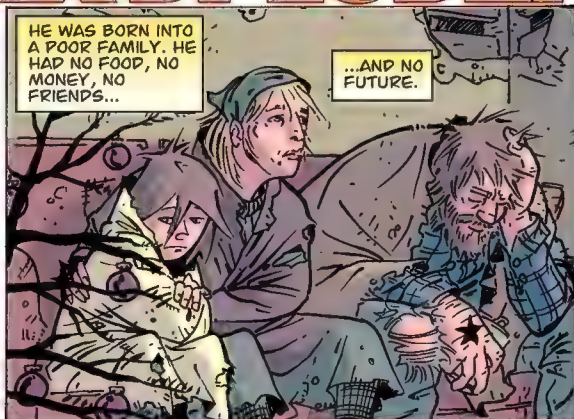
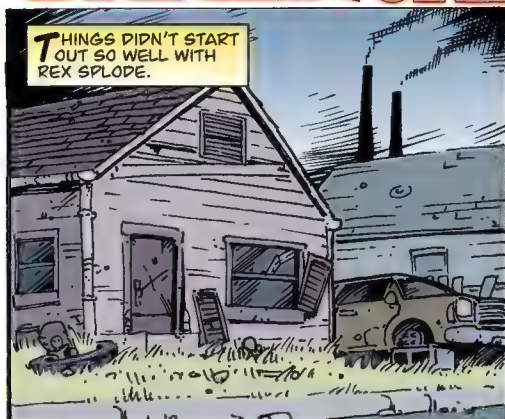


REMEMBER, SHE WAS A PAMPERED LITTLE RICH GIRL.

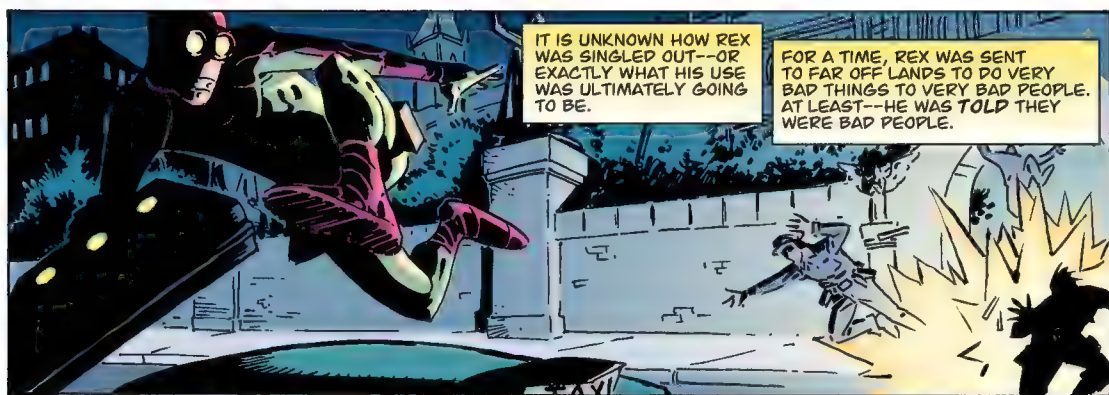
THEY DON'T USUALLY DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF THINGS VERY WELL.



# AT LONG LAST - THE SECRET ORIGIN OF REX SPLODE!







IT IS UNKNOWN HOW REX WAS SINGLED OUT--OR EXACTLY WHAT HIS USE WAS ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE.

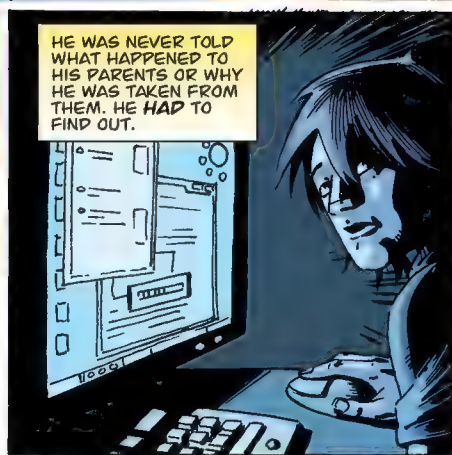
FOR A TIME, REX WAS SENT TO FAR OFF LANDS TO DO VERY BAD THINGS TO VERY BAD PEOPLE. AT LEAST--HE WAS TOLD THEY WERE BAD PEOPLE.



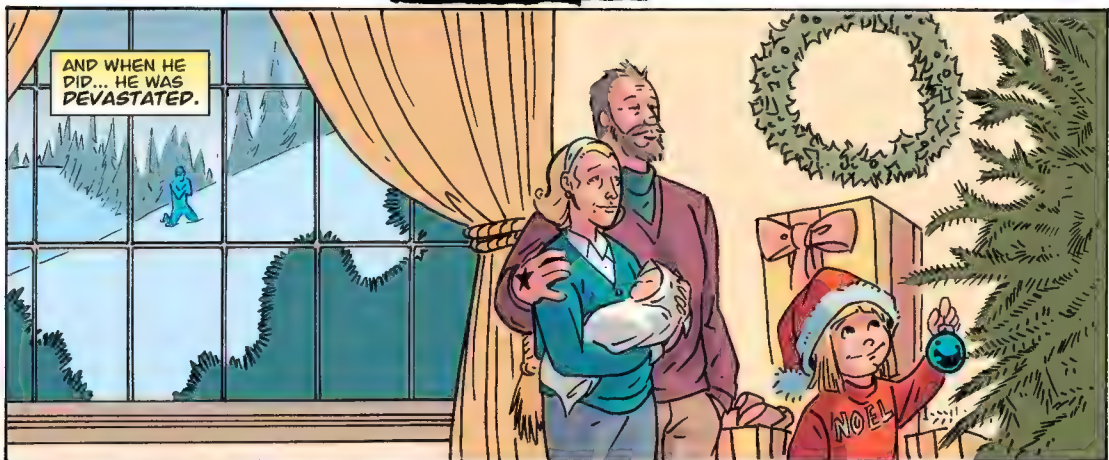
FOR A TIME HE WAS LOYAL. VERY LOYAL.



UNTIL HE ESCAPED.



HE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS OR WHY HE WAS TAKEN FROM THEM. HE HAD TO FIND OUT.



AND WHEN HE DID... HE WAS DEVASTATED.

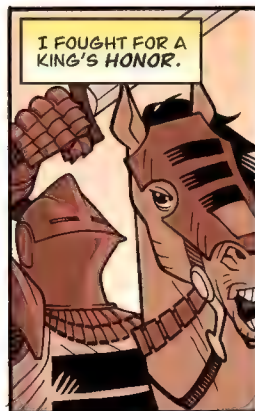
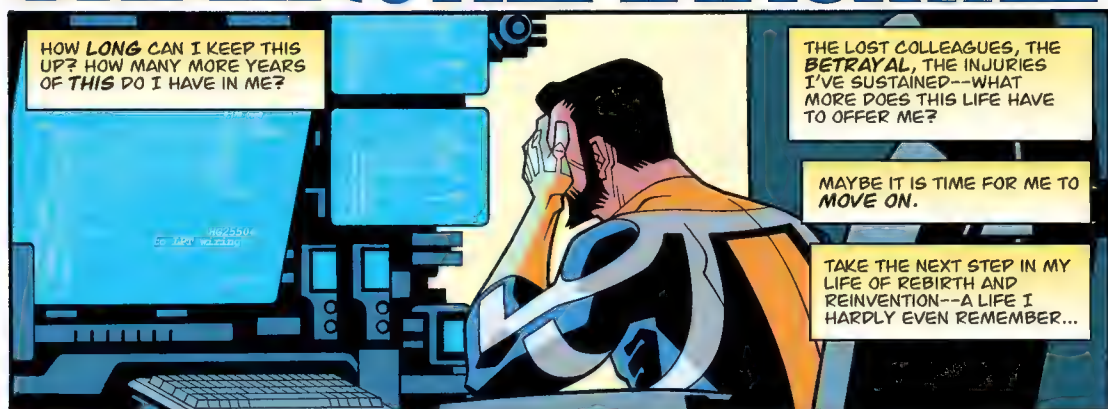


SO THE NEXT TIME REX IS ACTING LIKE A JERK--HAVE A LITTLE COMPASSION.

IT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING HE'S DONE... BUT MAYBE YOU'LL BE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT TIME HE GOES AND MAKES AN ASS OF HIMSELF.



# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF THE IMMORTAL!





# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF DUPLI-KATE!



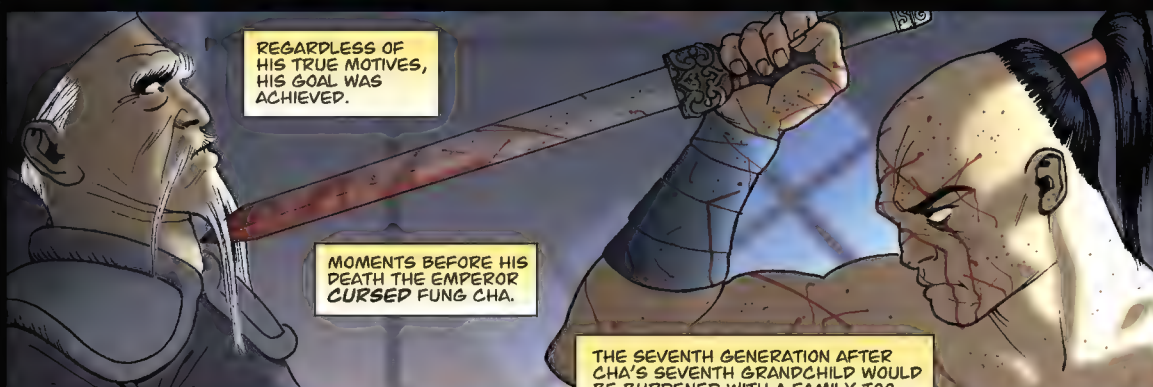
ANCIENT CHINA.

THE RUTHLESS WARLORD FUNG CHA WAS FIGHTING HIS WAY TO THE EMPEROR WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE.

FUNG CHA WAS A SKILLED FIGHTER AND WAS MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE EMPEROR'S ELITE GUARD WITH LITTLE EFFORT.



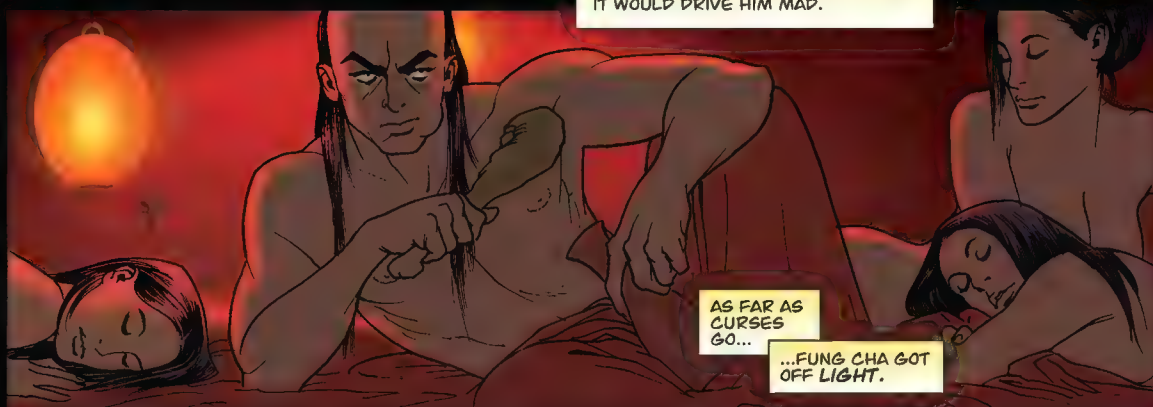
SOME WOULD SAY CHA WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER, SAVING THE WORLD FROM THIS EVIL EMPEROR. OTHERS WOULD CLAIM CHA WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A POWER HUNGRY MADMAN.



REGARDLESS OF HIS TRUE MOTIVES, HIS GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.

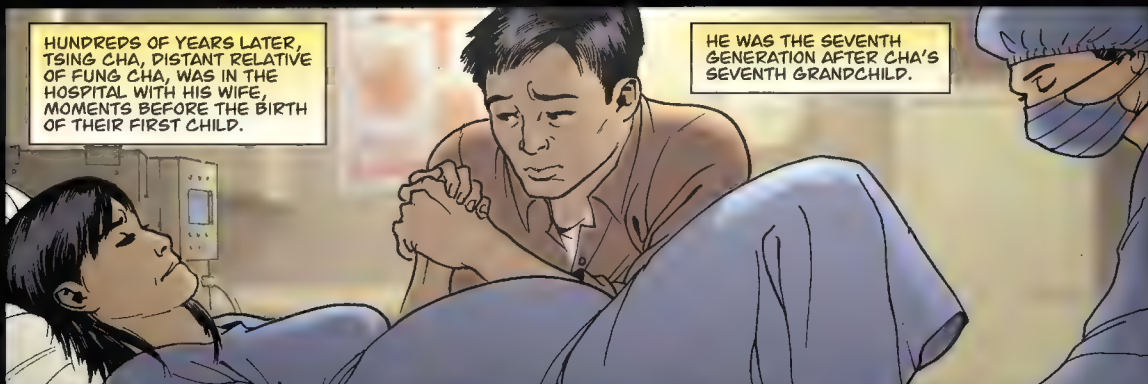
MOMENTS BEFORE HIS DEATH THE EMPEROR CURSED FUNG CHA.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD WOULD BE BURDENED WITH A FAMILY TOO LARGE FOR HIM TO CARE FOR... AND IT WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD.



AS FAR AS CURSES GO...

...FUNG CHA GOT OFF LIGHT.

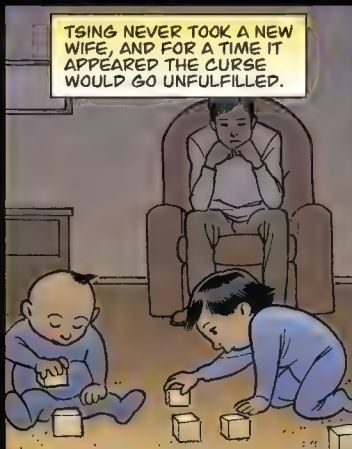


HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER, TSING CHA, DISTANT RELATIVE OF FUNG CHA, WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE, MOMENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD.

HE WAS THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD.



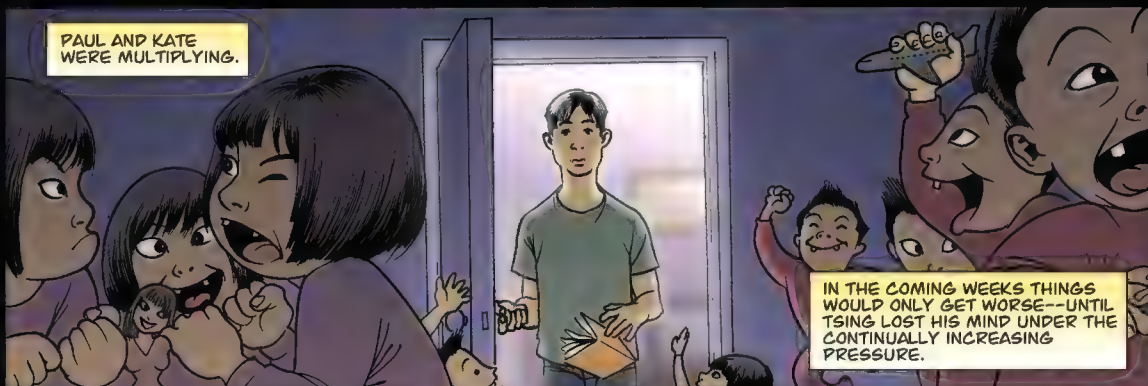
IN A TRAGIC TURN OF FATE, TSING'S WIFE DIED IN CHILD-BIRTH. LEAVING TSING TO RAISE THEIR TWINS, WHO HE NAMED PAUL AND KATE.



TSING NEVER TOOK A NEW WIFE, AND FOR A TIME IT APPEARED THE CURSE WOULD GO UNFULFILLED.



BUT THE EMPEROR'S RAGE WOULD NOT BE DENIED.



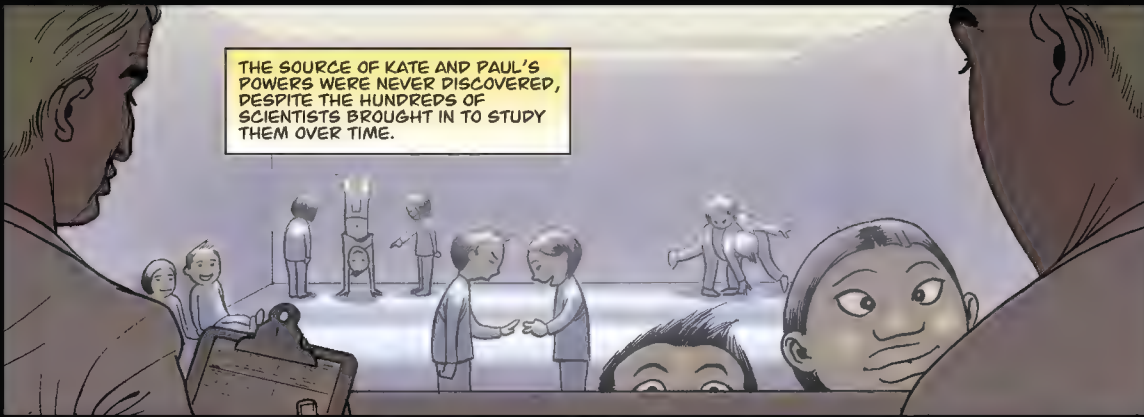
PAUL AND KATE WERE MULTIPLYING.

IN THE COMING WEEKS THINGS WOULD ONLY GET WORSE--UNTIL TSING LOST HIS MIND UNDER THE CONTINUALLY INCREASING PRESSURE.




TSING WAS CARTED OFF TO THE ASYLUM AND THE HUNDREDS OF KATES AND PAULS BECAME WARDS OF THE STATE.





THE SOURCE OF KATE AND PAUL'S POWERS WERE NEVER DISCOVERED, DESPITE THE HUNDREDS OF SCIENTISTS BROUGHT IN TO STUDY THEM OVER TIME.



WHEN THEY REACHED PUBERTY, BOTH KATE AND PAUL GAINED CONTROL OF THEIR POWERS, ABLE TO MULTIPLY AND ABSORB THEIR DUPLICATES AT WILL.

THEY BECAME A TEENAGE HEROIC DUO, RIGHTING WRONGS AND KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE.

DUPLI-KATE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE TEEN TEAM AND LATER AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE SECOND VERSION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT CRIME TO THIS DAY.

THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS OF MULTI-PAUL ARE UNKNOWN.

# AT LONG LAST, THE SECRET ORIGIN OF ATOM EVE!

THE STORY STARTED OUT ON A RATHER SAD NOTE-- BUT HEY, YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.

I--I'M SORRY, HONEY--I'M SO SORRY.

OH, ADAM!

ERICKSON, SIR--I'M SORRY--THERE WAS JUST NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER. THE BABY DIED IN CHILDBIRTH--IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.

YOU ARE OUT OF LINE, DOCTOR BRANDYWORTH--THIS WAS OUR PROJECT--YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME BEFORE YOU CHOSE A CIVILIAN HOSPITAL.

DOCTOR RODGERS, LISTEN TO ME--THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE TEST SUBJECT TO THE BASE--THE BABY WAS COMING.

AND NOW IT'S DEAD. THAT'S MILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS DOWN THE DRAIN, BRANDYWORTH. IF YOU MAKE IT TO TOMORROW WITHOUT LOSING YOUR JOB OVER THIS, I'LL BE SURPRISED.

ADAM AND BETSY WILKINS? I HAVE YOUR BABY RIGHT HERE. IT WAS TOUGH AND GO FOR A WHILE BUT THE DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HER.

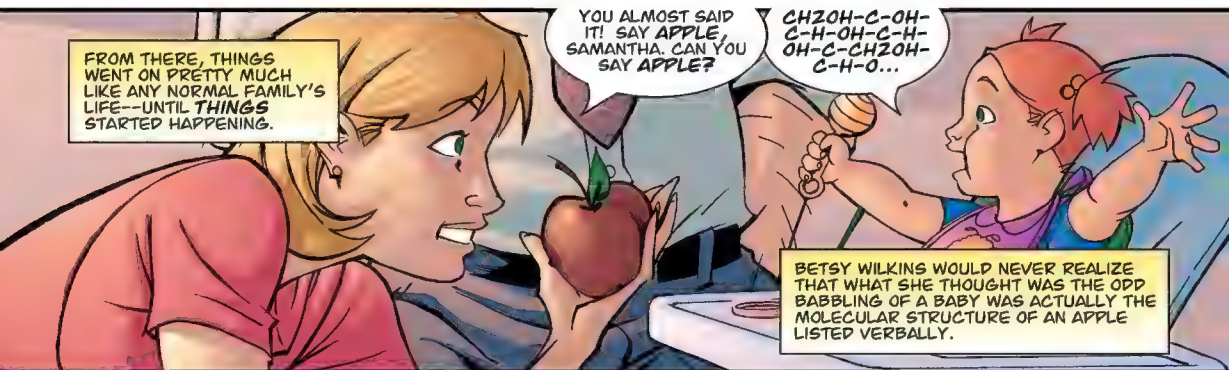
BUT-- BUT WE WERE TOLD--

ADAM, SHUSH! PLEASE--JUST ACCEPT THE MIRACLE.

OUR BABY IS ALIVE...

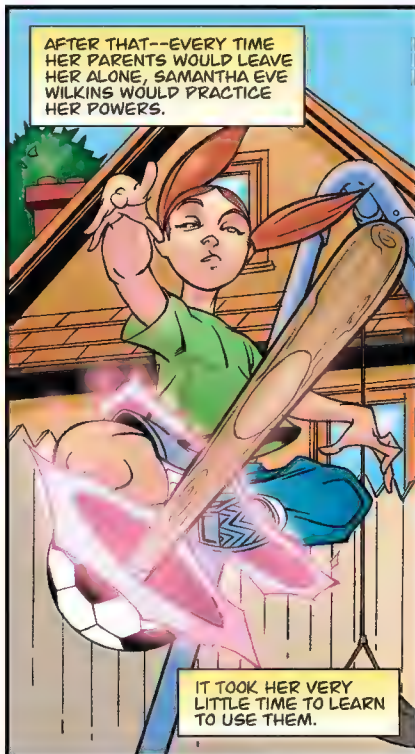
OUR SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.





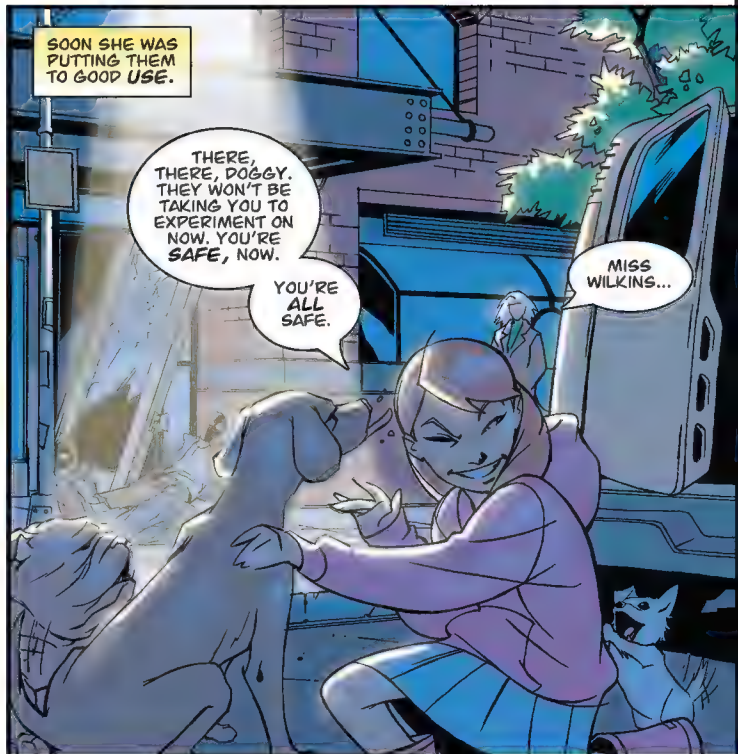


AFTER THAT--EVERY TIME HER PARENTS WOULD LEAVE HER ALONE, SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS WOULD PRACTICE HER POWERS.



IT TOOK HER VERY LITTLE TIME TO LEARN TO USE THEM.

SOON SHE WAS PUTTING THEM TO GOOD USE.

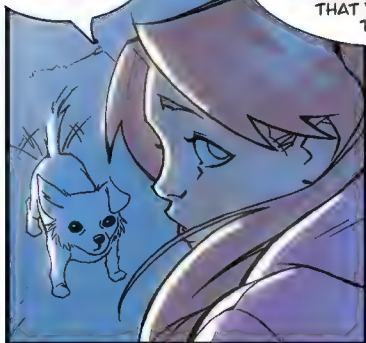


THERE, THERE, DOGGY. THEY WON'T BE TAKING YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON NOW. YOU'RE SAFE, NOW.

YOU'RE ALL SAFE.

MISS WILKINS...

WHO ARE YOU--HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!



I COULD BE CONSIDERED YOUR FATHER--IN A SENSE. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS--IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME.

YOU WERE THE SUBJECT OF IN UTERO EXPERIMENTS--FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A WEAPON--BUT I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.



WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS VERY DANGEROUS. I STAGED YOUR DEATH--REPLACED YOU WITH A BABY WHO HAD DIED DURING BIRTH--SO YOU COULD HAVE A LIFE WITH THE WILKINS FAMILY--BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY A SECRET!

IF THEY LEARN OF YOUR POWERS BEING USED--THEY'LL KNOW YOU LIVED--THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY RECOVER YOU.



YOU MUST STOP THIS AT ONCE! STOP USING YOUR POWERS FOR ANYTHING--FOREVER--THEY MUST NOT DISCOVER YOU SURVIVED.

IF THEY FIND YOU--THEY WILL TAKE YOU--YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WEAPON--YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT--WILL END!

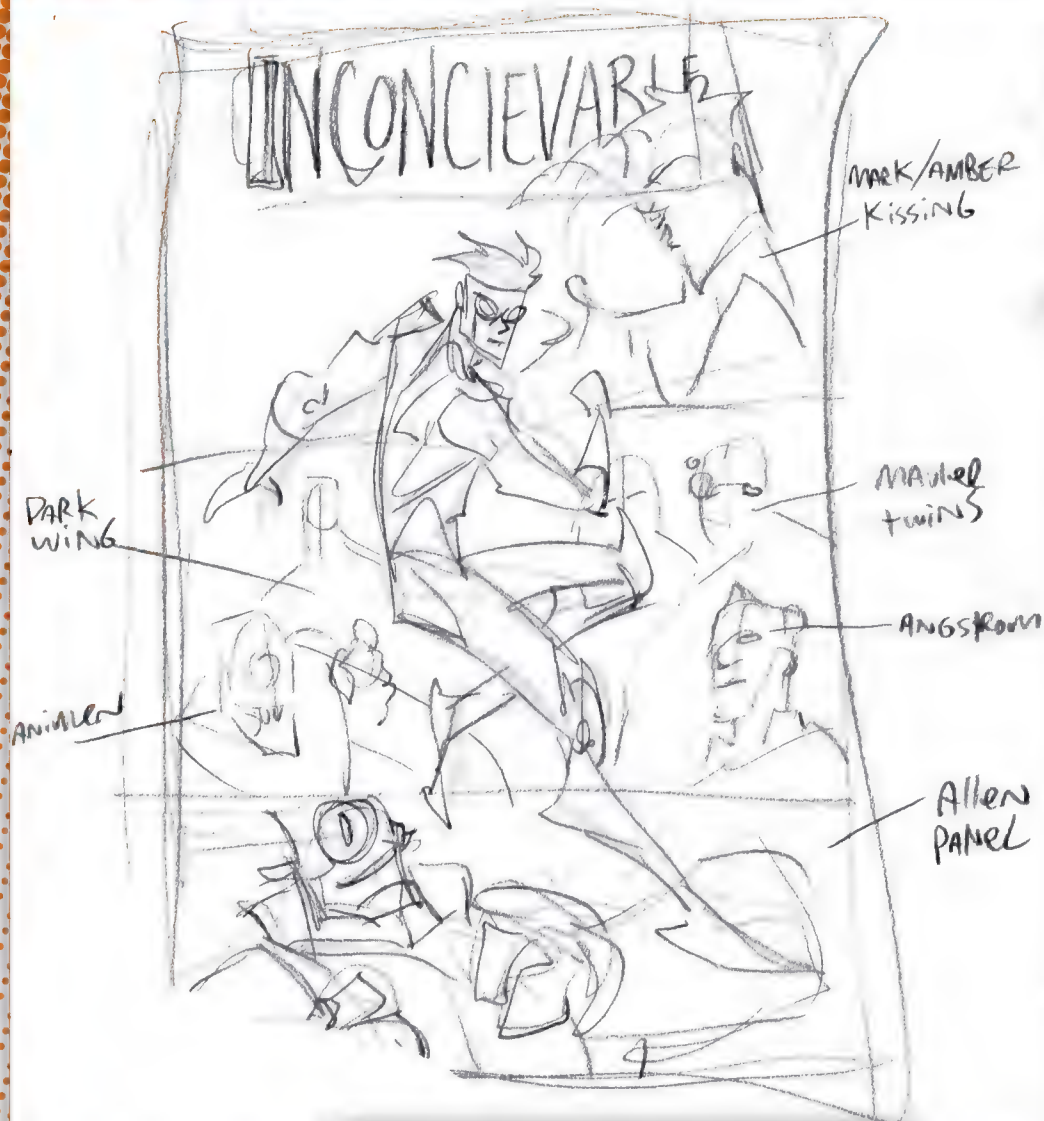


OBVIOUSLY--SHE FOUND A WAY TO AVOID ALL THIS, BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.









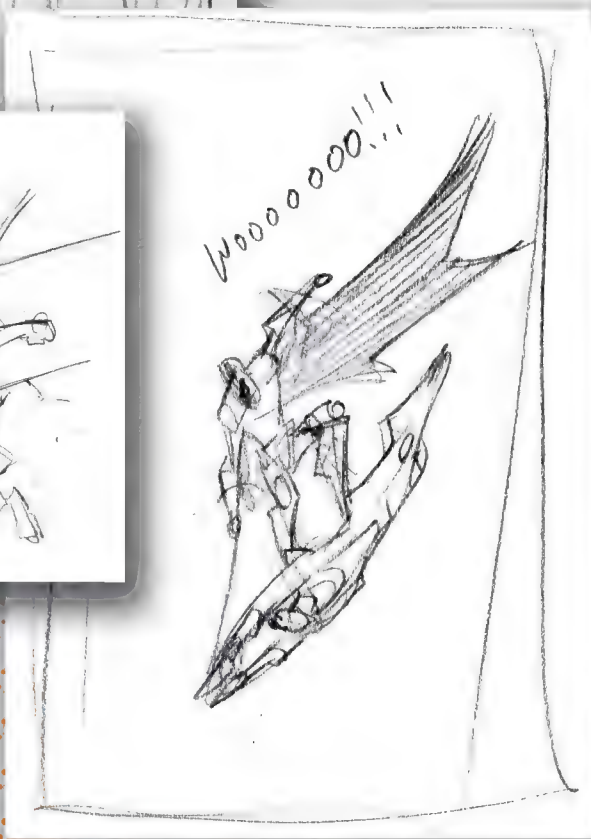
On this page you will see Ryan's original sketch for the cover of this volume. The trade-dress for these collections has become a cool pose of Mark with panels behind him, depicting things that happened in this volume. So here's another one. Bill Crabtree absolutely hates this idea. It bugs him to no end to have to come up with a different color scheme for what is essentially the same cover every time. In an effort to accommodate Bill without abandoning this theme (which I LIKE) we're trying something a little different with Volume 6. Which you guys will see when that volume is released.

On the following page, you'll see Ryan's attempt to get ahead of the game on Invincible poses for these trade paperbacks. We'll probably eventually use one or two of these. Probably the one in the center with the guns.





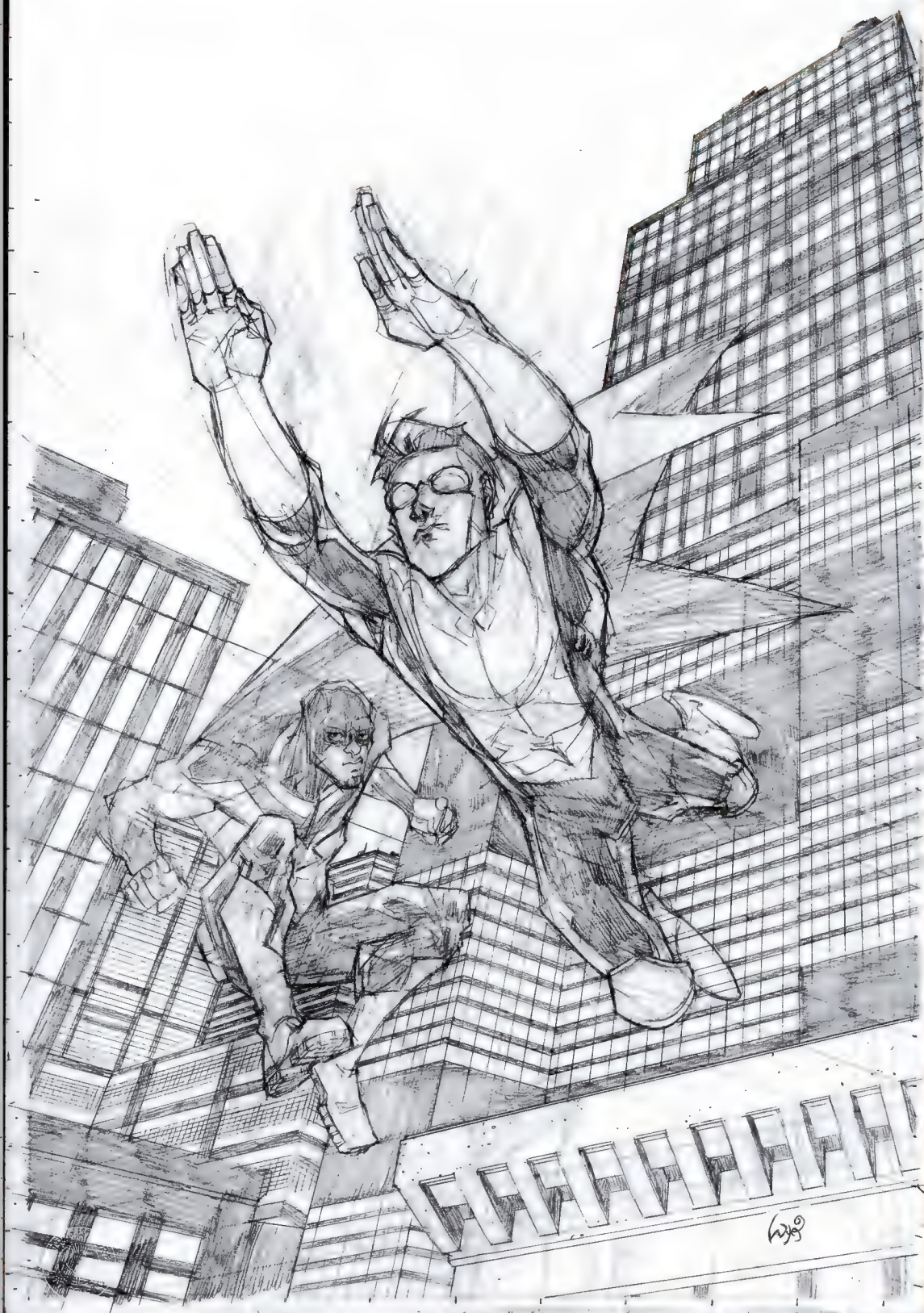




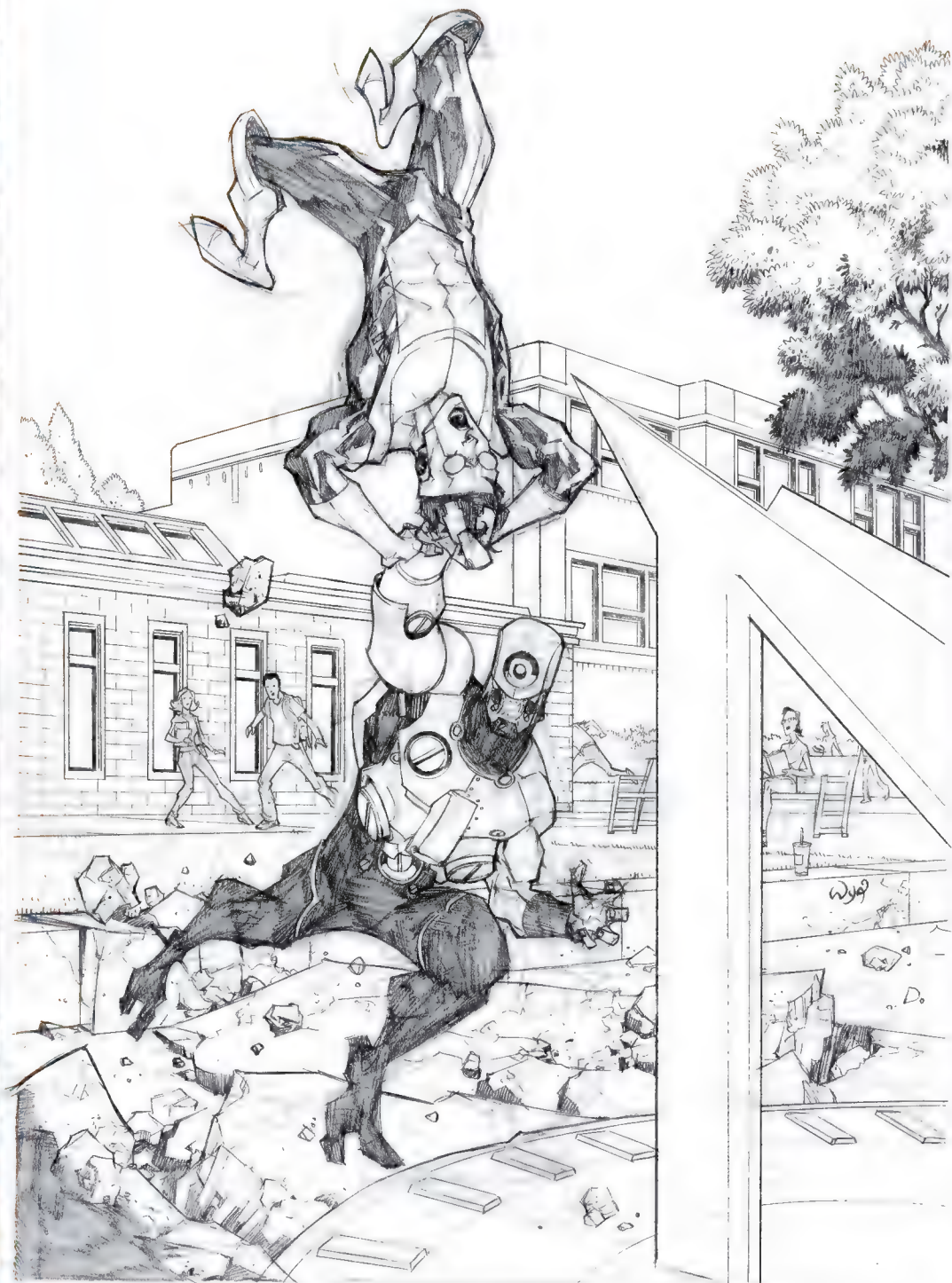
Ryan's layouts for the cover to issue 21. I'll never forgive myself for not telling him to use the one with Darkwing surfing on Invincible's back.

On the following page, we see Ryan's pencils for the cover to 21.







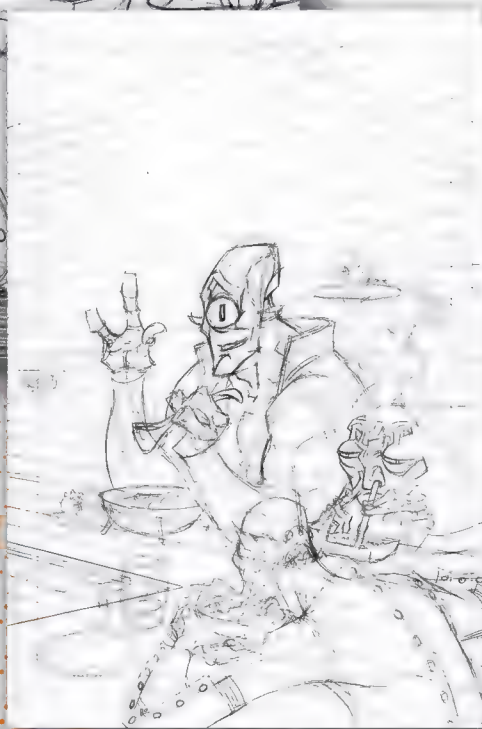


Here we have the original pencils for the cover to issue 20. I just wasn't feeling this one. The placement of the Reaniman's legs were off and the whole piece just didn't flow the way it should have. I think the final version we used looked much better.









Ryan's rough sketch and pencils for the cover to 23. The all Allen issue. I hope you cats liked that one. I tried something a little different for it and to be honest, some people out there just didn't dig it. Screw those guys, though. This was probably the most fun comic I've ever written. I had a blast with this one.





The pencils to the big 0 issue. I had a lot of fun with this issue too. Recaping things while strengthening Mark and Amber's relationship. Up until this issue, most people didn't like Amber--now, some people do.





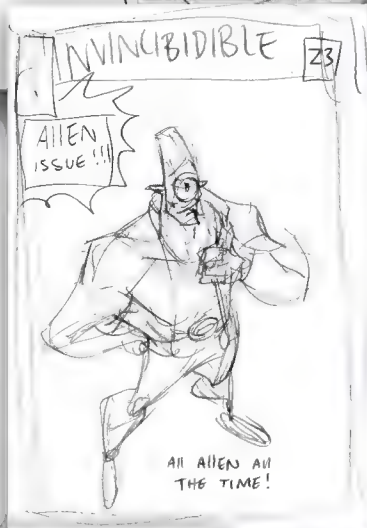
Here's a sketch for the cover to issue 24 along with a redesign for the new Darkwing. I was reluctant to bring back any of the original Guardians of the Globe members because, lets face it, they were pretty derivative of other, slightly more well know characters. But the story in issue 21 is actually part of a larger subplot that will be taking center stage in future issues and so I couldn't resist. And... I like the name Darkwing. So there.







More Allen. You all love Allen as much as I do right? I hope so. When Allen got beat all to crap in issue 23 I sent the splash page of him all ripped up out to some friends who hadn't read the issue yet, knowing they'd think I had killed him. Cory Walker especially was **MIGHTY** pissed. I had quite a time reading all their responses. Allen is here to stay, folks. He's one of my favorites.



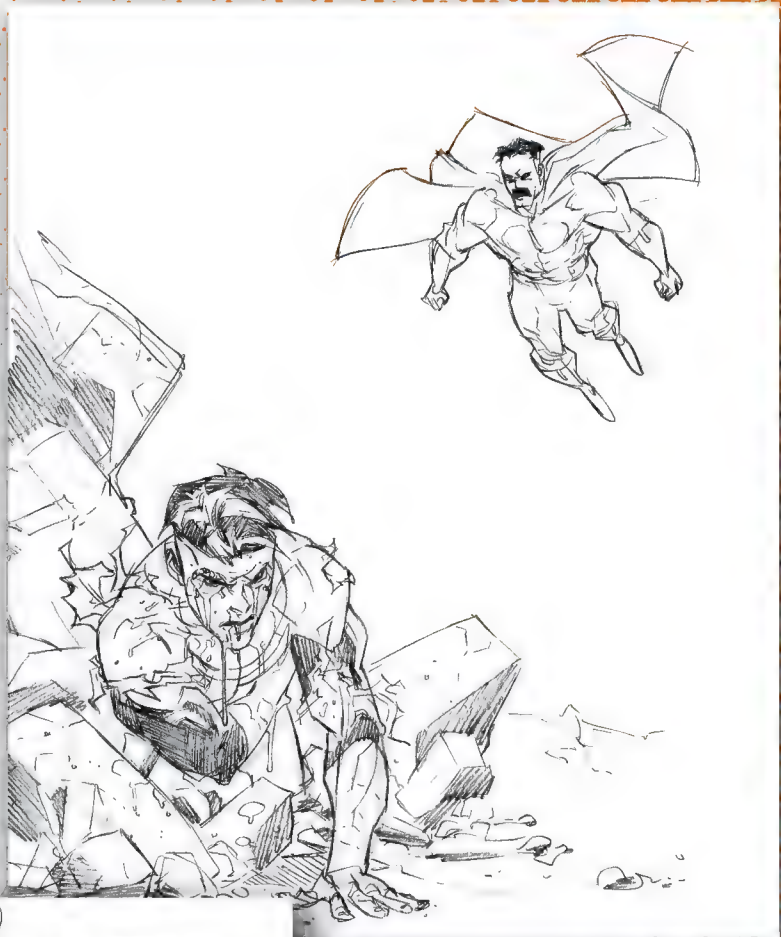


Just some drawings Ryan did for fun.  
Nothing to read here, move along.





Another drawing Ryan did for fun, along with some layouts for issues 21 and 24.



Just some random fun. Mark as a zombie, Invincible fighting some random other superhero whom I do not recognize whatsoever. And the sketches for the cover to Scott Kurtz's Invincible crossover in PVP issue 14. Scott's a pal of mine, and an Invincible fan... so of course, it only seemed to be a matter of time before the characters met, and I sure as hell wasn't going to do it in THIS book... heh.



MORE OF A  
CLOSE-UP OF  
JADE BEING  
DIPPED. (THINK CLEAN  
ROBERT.)







MARK GRAYSON  
AGE 30

Cory Walker and I talk on the phone a lot. Sometimes we'll chat about Invincible and then he'll do fun little sketches as a result. One day we were talking about how funny Mark would look with a mustache when he got older. Him being Viltrumite and all, he'd HAVE to have one... and how it'd be cool if he had a new costume then, that was more like Nolan's. The next day I got these sketches.





The plan for Angstrom Levy was for him to be turned into a deformed freak. I wanted to give him some sort of brain related deformity, since he was absorbing the minds of all his doubles. This being comics, though--just about every brain-related kind of deformity you can imagine has been done. So my idea was to have Angstrom's brains expand down into his shoulders and back. I figured that would look cool. Ryan's first attempt was too standard, and he didn't quite get my "shoulders and back" suggestion--which is why I got the "Look how dumb you are, Robert" Alien-style Angstrom sketch. Since Ryan wasn't quite getting what I wanted, I brought in Cory to see what he could do. Cory seemed to get what I wanted, his designs were mighty cool, actually. Using those as a basis, Ryan was able to wrap his head around what I wanted and the final design for deformed Angstrom was born. We'll be seeing more of this guy VERY soon.





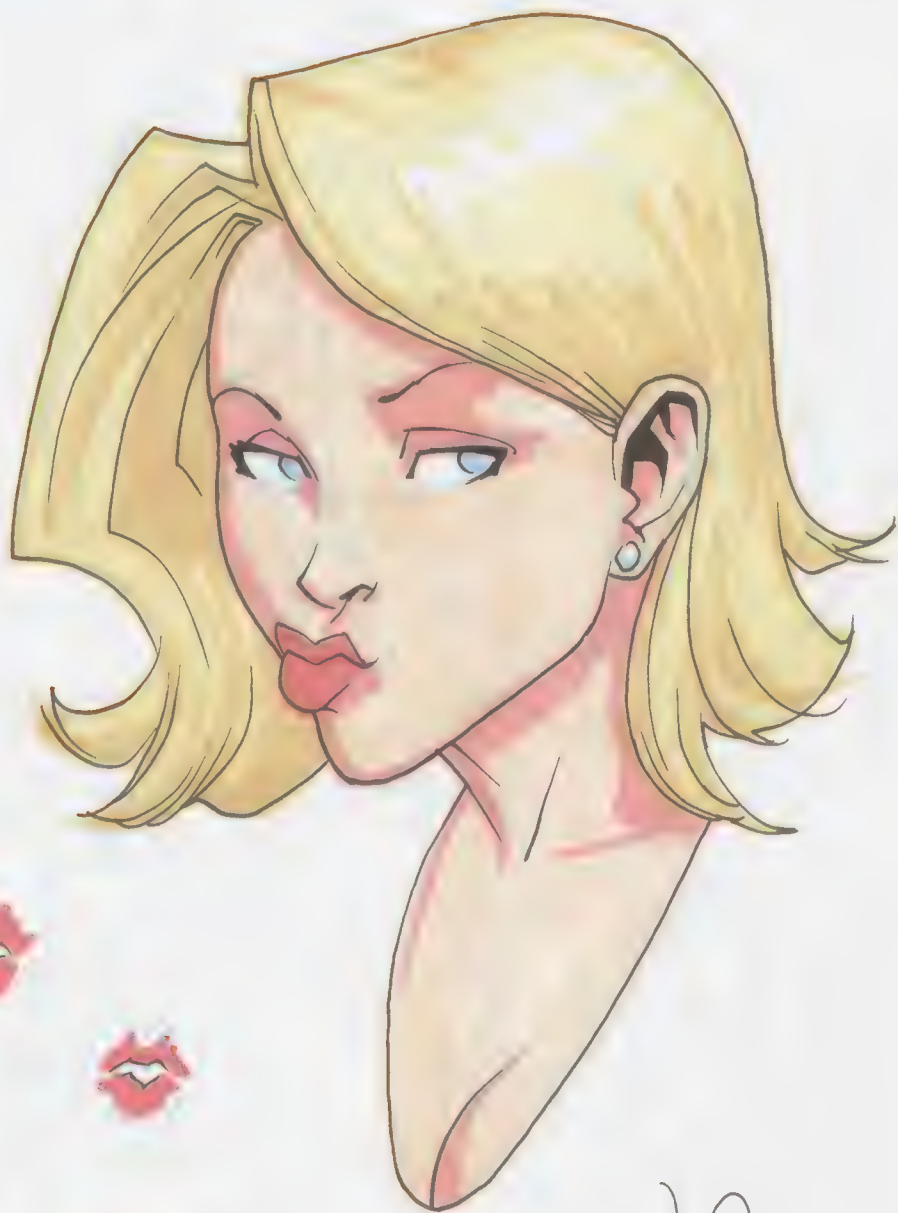


Over the next bit of pages in this sketchbook we'll be sharing with you some of Ryan's marker drawings he's been doing at conventions for people. If you ever see Ryan at a con, ask for one of these puppies. They're worth whatever he's charging... unless he's charging too much.









Wyg











That's all they drew, kids. I hope you enjoyed this sketchbook section as much as I did.

-Robert Kirkman





Fighting Supervillains.  
Saving the World.  
Keeping a Secret Identity.

Being a superhero hasn't been easy.



Now Mark Grayson is falling in love.



Things are starting to get complicated.



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# ZONE

